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Rev. J. Delaney

A SERIES

OF

FAMILIAR DISCOURSES

FOR EVERY

SUNDAY AND FESTIVAL

OF THE YEAR.



BY

THE REV. EDWARD PEACH.



VOL. I.



LONDON :

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TO
THE CONGREGATION
ATTACHED TO
THE CHAPEL OF ST. CHAD,
BIRMINGHAM;
THESE
FAMILIAR DISCOURSES
ARE
PRESENTED, AND DEDICATED
BY THEIR HUMBLE SERVANT,
AND AFFECTIONATE PASTOR,
EDWARD PEACH.

TO no others than to
you, the beloved objects of my pastoral
labours and solitudes, can I appropriately

dedicate the publication of this **SERIES OF FAMILIAR DISCOURSES**. They were written purposely for your instruction. They have been frequently preached to you. They have met your approbation : and I am happy to be able to say, that they have, to all appearance, been of considerable service to your spiritual welfare. This conviction has been the source, to me, of inexpressible consolation. How long Providence may be pleased to continue to give me zeal and strength to administer the benefits of religion to you, is more than any of us can foresee. Considering my advanced stage of life, the additional fatigues, which I have to endure, and the multiplied dangers to which I am exposed, arising from the multitudes of poor, whom I have, and shall have to attend in fevers and in sicknesses of every kind, we may reasonably calculate that the time, if not of my existence amongst you, at least of my strength and vigour, will be much shorter than the twenty years,

which I have already devoted to your service. But whether that be the decree of Providence or not, it is the most fervent desire of my soul to continue to be of service to you, and to the dear children, whose early entrance into the paths of virtue it has been my duty to direct, and to let my voice be heard in your private circles, and at your fire-side, even after strength, vigour, and life itself, shall be taken from me. I present to you, therefore, these Discourses. I request you to consider them, after I am taken from the abodes of mortality, as a legacy, the most valuable, which a Pastor, whose only solicitude, during the period of his residence amongst you, was the salvation of your souls, could possibly bequeath. I beseech you to ponder frequently on these effusions of zeal, which the grace of God enabled me, over and over again, to pour forth before you. But above all, I beseech you to labour to practise the lessons I have inculcated, and to persevere to the end, in

hopes of our being united together again in the bosom of our God, never more to be separated for eternity.

In presenting, however, this legacy of affection to you, I am necessitated to publish the work, and consequently it will be spread amongst the community at large. May it be as profitable to all who hear or read it, as I hope it has, and will be to you. To the public, therefore, something will be required to be said on my part. I do not seek applause: and I hope that the purity of my intentions will preserve me from censure. These Discourses are original compositions: probably less entitled to merit on that account. Had I again explored the rich mines of pulpit oratory, and genuine piety, which are to be found in the publications of foreign preachers, I might have presented to you a series of Sermons, not inferior to that which I extracted from Massillon. But, being appointed

to superintend a numerous and encreasing congregation, in a very populous town, I was induced to turn my thoughts to their peculiar spiritual wants, and to arrange my Sermons accordingly. I did so. And, having reason to believe that my labours met with that success, which a preacher ought alone to seek after, I feel less difficulty in exposing them to the public eye. To the admirers of splendid oratory, and to the learned composers of studied, and minutely arranged harangues, I may appear presumptuous. But, by those, whose only desire is to promote the reign of piety, and who are disposed to rejoice when an addition is made to the means of producing this desirable effect, I fondly hope that this publication will be graciously received. Instruction, not oratory alone, has been my aim; and consequently, the approbation of those only do I ambition, who prefer the improvement of the heart, before the mere gratification of the intellectual senses.

With respect to doctrine, I bow implicitly to the articles of faith taught by the Catholic Church. If any thing, contained in these Discourses, be discovered by my spiritual superiors, as infringing in any manner on any one of these articles, I will immediately disclaim, and retract it.

*St. Chad's, Birmingham,
August 15, 1827.*

SERMONS.



FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.



ON THE LAST DAY.



There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars, and upon the earth, distress of nations.....men withering away through fear and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world.....LUKE xxi. 25, 26.

THESE, my brethren, are the dreadful signs, which are to precede the dissolution of this terrestrial world; and these are the effects, which will be produced in the minds of men by the approach of the uncertain evils that are to follow. Oh, my brethren, turn your attention to them. They are of serious importance to every one of you. Perhaps these dreadful signs will not take place during the course of our natural lives. But, although we

may not witness the disasters preceding this universal and final catastrophe, the scenes that will immediately follow, will be witnessed by us all, and will be witnessed, either with terror and dismay, or with joy and gladness, according as we shall have spent our time during our mortality.

Turn your attention, therefore, my brethren, to this important subject. You are now light-some and gay. Your thoughts are engaged in procuring, or enjoying the things of this world. You are pleased with variety. You are delighted with transitory amusements. Your eyes seem to be fixed on perishable things, as if the earth was your permanent place of abode ; and as if this world was to continue for ever.

But, my brethren, things will not continue always in the state in which they now are. All that is earthly must, and will be dissolved. Our eyes have been long habituated to witness that, no sooner does any thing new appear on the face of the earth, than it hastens incessantly forward towards its dissolution. All the inhabitants of the earth, who have preceded us, have disappeared, and are now no more to be seen among men. These bodies of ours, in the same manner, will, after a space of time, be again reduced to their original dust. The time, likewise, will come when the cities, kingdoms, and empires, which now exist, and which seem to bid defiance to the vicissitude of

earthly changes, yea, the whole universe itself, which to us appears to be built on the solid basis of eternity, shall be overwhelmed with a devouring tempest of fire, which shall reduce to ashes every thing created. Even the sun, moon, and stars shall share in the universal sentence, and be enveloped in the ruins of destruction.

Oh! my brethren, what more serious subject can be presented for your consideration! You, particularly, whoever you may be of my present auditory, who look to the world as the chief object of your ambition, and as the end of all your labours; who, before all other things, prefer the gratifications of the flesh, *make a god of your belly, and glory in your shame*, (Phil. iii.) you are particularly interested in this subject. A certain time hence, and all will be at an end:—all, that appeared so valuable to you, shall be swept away, as rubbish is swept away by the cleaner; shall be carried off, as filth is carried off by the torrent: and nothing shall remain, but your own selves, and the good or bad works that have filled up the measure of your time. Oh! how long will you love vanity, and court iniquity! Why will you not seek after things eternal, and fix your hearts on those possessions, which will never be taken from you?

But, when will this final dissolution take place? That day, my brethren, is concealed from human knowledge: or, as our Lord says:

(Matt. xxiv. 36.) *that day and hour no one knoweth, no not the angels of heaven, but the Father alone. . . . For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. But although that day will come suddenly upon all men, as the lightning cometh out of the east, and appeareth even into the west, yet signs and wonders shall indicate its approach. There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars: and on earth distress of nations, by reason of the confusion of the rour-ing of the sea and of the waves. There shall be wars and rumours of wars; and there shall be pestilences and famines, and earthquakes in places. But these are only the beginnings of sorrows.—* These signs, however, will probably not be noticed by the world at large. As in the days of Noe, men viewed the progress of the building of the ark with unconcern, and laughed to scorn the predictions of the approaching deluge, which the venerable patriarch made to them: so likewise, in the latter times, men will probably attribute the disasters preceding the final dissolution, to natural causes, and laugh to scorn the admonitions of the ministers of God, declaring that, ere long, *time will be no more.* The just alone will profit from existing circumstances, and *watch, because they know not at what hour the Lord will come.*

That the day of the Lord is far distant, is more than we can flatter ourselves. Wars, and rumours of wars, and revolutions, are certainly characteristic of the age, in which we live. But, supposing that these are the tokens, to which our Saviour alluded, yet they are only *the beginnings of sorrows*. The end is not yet. But there is one sign, which is to precede the great commotions of nature, unfolding itself in the clearest manner to our view : and that is, a general decay of piety, a neglect of religion, apostacy from the true faith, and an almost total subversion of morality. But, whether it will be long, before the immediate signs begin to appear, God alone can tell. This point, however, is not necessary to be investigated. All that is profitable to be said on it is, that they may possibly appear in our times ; and that, perhaps *this generation will not pass away, till all these things be done*.

We will, therefore, call your attention to a subject of greater certainty—a subject, in which we shall all be engaged, I mean, the great accounting day, which will take place immediately after the general conflagration of the world.

Here, my brethren, summons your attention, and endeavour to form an idea in your minds of the state in which you will be, when that awful event shall take place.—At the command of God, an archangel shall sound a trumpet, and with a loud voice exclaim: *Arise ye*

dead, and come to judgment. In an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, the dead shall arise from their graves, and the whole race of mankind shall be collected together.— Oh! what a spectacle will then be presented before our eyes! The whole race of Adam standing confusedly together. Emperors, and kings, and conquerors on a level with the meanest of their subjects, or of those, over whom they had exercised an unjust authority:—the members of the church, the apostles, martyrs, confessors, and virgins, intermingled with their persecutors and opponents:—the good grain and the cockle confusedly mixed together, prepared for the harvest.

My brethren, survey this innumerable, this motley multitude. They are all standing together: the whole of the race of Adam, without distinction of good or bad. Examine them individually. See how different is the appearance of some from that of others. Looks of consternation and dismay appear on the countenances of the majority; and on the others, the enlivening beams of placid serenity. The greater number appear hideous and loathsome: the others, encircled with rays of light. All are looking up to the heavens in the attitude of anxious expectation.

Oh, my brethren, reflect that when this awful scene takes place, you will form a part of this immense crowd, and figure to yourselves the anxious state of suspense, in which you will be

at that moment, looking up to the heavens in expectation of your Judge.

At length, the heavens open.—At an immeasurable distance is beheld the Son of Man, advancing with the rapidity of lightning towards the earth.—He takes his place upon a cloud, over the heads of this immense assembly. Before him is placed the cross—that sign of his ineffable love for man. Legions of angels attend about him. Rays of inaccessible light dart from his countenance; and a *two-edged sword proceeds from his mouth*. All power is given to him in heaven and on earth.—Oh! what are the feelings of the reprobate at this awful appearance! What are the feelings of the bloody persecutors of the meek and humble Jesus, and of his faithful servants! What are the feelings of the enemies of the cross of Christ! What are the feelings of the worldly wise, of the proud, the effeminate, the debauched, the profligate! What are the feelings of all, who have sought their consolation here, who have neglected the duties of religion, who have been christians only in name! Will they dare to lift up their eyes, and behold the terrors of infinite and offended Majesty? Ah! *they will wither away through fear: they will call on the mountains to fall upon them*, and hide them from the wrath that is to come.

The division of this immense multitude takes place. The wicked are driven to the left: the just are placed on the right.—What a separation!—a separation, that is to last for eter-

nity! In numberless instances, husband will be separated from wife, parents from children,—never, never more to meet again.—But this is of minor consideration. The wicked will behold themselves on the point of being for ever separated from their God, the centre of all good; and unutterable anguish and despair will overwhelm their souls. Oh! with what envy will they turn their eyes to the happy company of the elect! In the midst of them, probably, they will discover men, who were formerly their dependants,—men, whom they had overlooked and despised;—men, whom they would not have suffered to remain in their presence, or to whom they would have considered it too humiliating a condescension to speak:—men, who had no other qualities to recommend them than holy poverty, and unfeigned piety. Oh! my brethren, who can conceive the anguish that will harrow up the souls of the wicked at this sight! how will they exclaim: *these are they, whom we had hitherto in derision, and for a parable of reproach. We fools, esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour. Behold, they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints.* (Wisd. v.)

But the business proceeds, and the books are opened. The consciences of all are made manifest to the whole world. *Every thing secret is revealed, and every thing hidden is brought to light.* What shame and confusion pervade the assembly of the wicked, when all their intrigues, all their abominations, all their impuri-

ties, all their dishonesties, all their transgressions committed by thought, word, or deed, are proclaimed aloud by the accusing angel! Where shall they hide their guilty heads, when the long catalogue of their crimes is presented before them,—when they hear the humiliating reproofs of the assembly of the saints,—and when they see their seducers, the devils, exulting over them, and rejoicing at their destruction?—Oh! their proud spirit would not submit to the least humiliation during their mortal lives, and now they are obliged to drink of the cup of degradation even to the very dregs.

But how different are the feelings of the saints! They have nothing to fear. They are no longer *parables of reproach*. They were humbled during life; and now they look forward to be exalted. In the countenance of their Judge, when turned towards them, they behold no terrors. Their consciences do not reprove them! Oh! no: they fix their eyes with transports of joy on their great deliverer:—they delight in the contemplation of his dazzling splendours. They loved him, during their abode on earth, and now, their love exceeds all bounds—they are enraptured—they seem to be already in possession of their crown. Their Lord proclaims aloud their good works, and pronounces their eulogium in the face of all mankind. Oh! these are honours indeed. How good it is to serve and love God during the days of our mortality!

But hark!!! the Judge proceeds to pronounce sentence.—With indignation flashing in his eyes, he turns to the affrighted multitude of the wicked.—He places himself in an attitude expressive of awful majesty, whose laws have been violated, and who is about to take vengeance on his enemies, and to establish the rights of justice for ever.—He displays before them his cross—the signal of his former love.—He describes in glowing colours the history of his mercies, and the multitude of graces and inspirations, which he imparted to every individual amongst them.—He convinces them that nothing was wanting on his part, and that all their miseries are of their own seeking.—He paints in the blackest light, their ingratitude, their baseness, their folly.—He sums up the whole, and so clearly does he prove their guilt, that every individual amongst them, is constrained, by the testimony of his own conscience, instantly and with one voice to pronounce against themselves that awful word, GUILTY.—Oh! that the mountains would fall upon them, and cover them! Oh! that they could sink into their original nothing!—But their attention is again arrested. They are obliged to fix their eyes on their terrific Judge. His countenance is terrible, like lightning;—and his voice mighty, like the loudest thunder. They hear their eternal doom—*Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.*..... Oh! the

dismal yells that instantly break forth from the mouths of these millions of wretched beings ! Oh! the horrid shrieks of despair, that resound on every side ! Listen to them, my brethren. Open your ears to hear them. Endeavour to instil a terror into your minds at the sound of their groans, and of the gnashing of their teeth. A salutary fear now, may prevent your being of the number of those wretched creatures hereafter.——No sooner is the sentence pronounced, but the devils seize on their prey :—the earth opens :—they sink :—they disappear :—the sound of their shrieks becomes fainter, in proportion as they advance into the abyss :—they are to be heard no longer :—the earth closes.——O the dismal end of worldly pride—of covetousness—of lust—of drunkenness—of impiety ! O the dismal horrors of an eternity of woe ! O eternity ! how little art thou thought of, or attended to, by senseless mortals !——But let us turn away from the frightful scene.

After the sentence has been pronounced on the reprobate, the Supreme Judge turns to his chosen servants—the faithful followers of his law. The rigours of his countenance are immediately softened down into looks of clemency and love. His eyes are cast around on the joyful assembly of patriarchs and prophets, and apostles, and martyrs, and confessors, and virgins, and of the just made perfect, and collected out of all ages, and nations, and peoples,

and tongues. He expands his bosom before them, and shows them the wonderful ways of his love in bringing about their salvation. He smiles upon them smiles of happiness. He pours into their souls with profusion the torrent of his delights.—Oh, my brethren, what are the transports of these blessed souls! Already are their labours abundantly repaid. For, imagine, if you can, what it is to behold the face of God—to behold that face looking with complacency on you—to behold the gates of heaven expanded before you—to behold the innumerable multitudes of your kindred spirits—the angels, your future companions, looking upon you with looks of love, and, with extended arms and expanded wings, ready to bear you up to the mansions of the eternal Sion. Yes, my brethren, who can conceive what it is to enjoy such a delight, even for one moment? Truly may it be said, that the labours of the just are amply rewarded, even before they take possession of their crown.

But the moment is come. Their loving Saviour, and tender Father, in an affectionate and stooping posture, stretches out his arms towards them, and with words dropping from his lips, as gentle as the morning dew, he invites them to his bosom: *Come, ye blessed of my Father, receive ye the kingdom, which has been prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*—Oh! what canticles of exultation and triumph instantly burst from the lips of

this glorious assembly! With what transports of gladness do they sing—*honour and glory, and benediction, and thanksgiving be to him that sits on the throne, and to the Lamb who has redeemed us by his blood!*—O, my brethren, may we be of the number to join in this happy concert!—No sooner are the words pronounced, than the Son of Man begins to ascend.—The angels follow, accompanied by the elect,—they enter the gates of the eternal Sion—they are presented to the Father by the Lamb, as the trophies of his victory—they are immersed in the ocean of the divinity—and, there they enjoy the fulness of beatitude for a never ending eternity.—Oh! how different is the lot of the faithful christian from that of the reprobate!

My brethren, when we reflect on this awful scene, in what light ought the transitory things of this world to appear! what opinion ought we to form of these senseless mortals, who, for the sake of this world, sacrifice eternity! what opinion ought we to form of ourselves, if we seek our consolation here, and expose our souls to the danger of perishing hereafter? O let the thoughts of this great accounting day be familiar to you. There is nothing in the description, but what is founded on the words of unerring truth. The only deficiency is, that the terrors of that day are too faintly described: and the reason is, because they are beyond the powers of description. Make them, then, the frequent subject of your thoughts, and they

will contribute to wean your affections from this world, and lead you to sincere repentance, and to works of piety.—Oh! with what pleasure, at the moment of dissolution, will you look forward to the future, if you can look back to a life well spent! With what joy will you listen to the voice of the minister of God, exhorting you to lift up your head, because your redemption is at hand! With what confidence, will you rise from your graves, at the last day, and hasten to meet your Judge! Attend therefore to these truths. Live, as you would wish to die: persevere to the end: and you will undoubtedly be welcomed into the abodes of peace, with this joyful sentence: *Come, receive the kingdom that has been prepared for you, from the foundation of the world.*

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

ON BROTHERLY LOVE.

The God of all patience and comfort grant you to be of one mind one towards another, according to Jesus Christ : that with one mind, and with one mouth, you may glorify God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.....ROM. xv. 5, 6.

THE words of the Apostle, which I have selected for my text, contain an admonition, which cannot be too frequently inculcated by the pastor, nor too seriously attended to by the flock. The same admonition is frequently repeated in the inspired writings : and our Lord himself does not hesitate to declare, that *peace and union* is the distinctive mark of his followers : *By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.* (John xiii.)

A more appropriate time for inculcating this admonition to you could not be selected. For, it is now that we are about to commemorate the wonders of the God of all mercies, who came down from heaven for the purpose of collecting his chosen servants into one fold, under one

shepherd ; of uniting all into one body under one head, in order that we may be all united together hereafter in the fellowship of the angels, during an endless eternity. Appropriate, therefore, is the time, that we should, in a particular manner, be exhorted to banish from our breasts every seed of dissension, that so, being united in the bonds of amity and peace, we may be found worthy to be reckoned in the number of his disciples, and to partake of the blessings which he has purchased for us.

Before I enter on my subject, it will be proper to remark, that what I shall propose to you, is not matter of counsel, but an absolute command,—one of the chief points of the law ; on the due performance of which the salvation of your souls depends. For, if you are not of one mind one towards another, you are at variance : if you are at variance, you do not possess christian charity : and if you do not possess christian charity, you are transgressors of the law, and of course estranged from Christ.

But what is the extent of the law ? The words, as contained in my text, are : *Be of one mind one towards another in Jesus Christ ; and with one mind and with one mouth glorify God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Or, in other words, be all united together in the bands of amity and concord :—let all contention, animosity, hatred, and envy, be banished from your breasts :—let all bickerings, backbitings, detractions, and calumnies, and whatever is con-

trary to sincere brotherly love, be no more heard of amongst you :—and let it be your determination to meet together in perfect unity and peace and love, for the purpose of celebrating the praises of the Divinity, and of glorifying God, and the Father of Him, who is our Lord and Saviour, our High-priest, and our Head.

This is the extent of the law. Ponder on it at leisure.—In the first place, collectively as a body, it is your duty to cherish unanimity amongst yourselves, and to be friendly and peaceable together. St. Paul says that we are members of one body, and that Christ is the head of this body. (1 Cor. xii.) Under this similitude is represented the whole extent of this precept. We are declared to be members of one body. Now what are the connections between the different members of a body? We ~~will say~~ a human body; for it is to a human body, that the similitude of St. Paul is alone applicable. The most perfect harmony exists between all its members : not the least dissension is witnessed between them. The hands never contend against the feet, nor the feet against the hands ; nor the hands or feet against the other parts or members. All is perfect peace between them : no jarring, animosity, or slander one against the other. Each is compassionate one towards another, and is ready to contribute, as far as in its power, to the benefit and relief of each of its fellow members.

From this similitude you may comprehend

the extent of the friendly connection which ought to subsist between you and your fellow-creatures. You are to consider them as members of the same body, of which you are a part. If you are the more exalted members of the body, it is not required that you should pay the same respect, or seek to raise above their intended level the more humble members. But still you are to consider them as members of the same body, and pay that attention to them, which is their due. And again, you who are the more humble members of the body are not to envy, or to rebel against the powerful and favoured members ; because thereby you would be causing dissension in the whole body, and would be depriving yourselves of that support, which is to be derived from the superior acquirements of the more exalted members. Were the feet and the hands to rebel against the heart and the bowels, how soon would the life of the whole body terminate !

Again, Christ is the head of this body. As the members of the natural body are implicitly submissive to the head, so are the members of this spiritual body required to be implicitly submissive to its spiritual head. According to this, it is your duty to believe all the mysteries of faith, which Christ, your head, has been pleased to reveal to you : it is your duty to fulfil all his commands ; and it is your duty to yield obedience in spiritual things to those, whom *the Holy Ghost has appointed bishops to*

rule the Church of God. (Acts xx.) For, as St. Paul says, (Eph. iv.) He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ : till we all meet into the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ : that, henceforth, we be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine . . . but doing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up in him, who is the head, even Christ. | To our spiritual rulers, therefore, we are to yield submission and respect : and so strict is the obligation, that our Lord declares, if we despise them, or refuse to hear them, we despise, and refuse to hear him himself. (Luke x.)

Oh ! my brethren, that the christian body corresponded in every respect with this illustrative description of the apostle ! In the first age of the Christian Church, a perfect unanimity prevailed amongst the disciples in all these points. They formed one body, united in obedience to its head. They were all of one heart and one mind. Their love for one another distinguished them from the rest of men. The more exalted members contributed to the wants of the inferior : and the inferior members, without murmuring or complaint, honoured the superior.

But, alas ! how is the gold of the sanctuary

debased! how is the fervour of the primitive disciples fallen away! Where amongst Christians shall we discover the properties of a body united in all its members, and submissive to one head! However, without remarking on the state of those, who are separated from you, and who wish to form a body to themselves; and even without remarking on the state of Christendom in general, I will call your attention merely to consider the state in which you are yourselves, as forming a small congregation, in which ought to be found all the properties which unite together the whole body of Christians, dispersed throughout the universe. Among yourselves, therefore, can it be said that that unanimity prevails, which is always to be witnessed between the members of the human body? As to your head in spiritual concerns, your pastor, knowing that he is in communion with his superior, and commissioned by him, you probably yield submission, by receiving his doctrines, and respecting his authority. * But how are you one with another? I do not wish to throw out unfounded accusations, or to apply remarks to any one individually. But does it not too frequently happen that the superior is wanting in his attentions to the inferior; and that the inferior envies and murmurs against the superior? Do we not too frequently witness that equals are at variance with equals? that dissensions and enmities are created and prolonged? and that detractions and calumnies

and rash judgments are propagated, and we may say, almost without scruple or remorse? Are there not amongst us those, who, by word and deed, oppose the members of their own body with as much eagerness, as if there was no common tie between them, or as if they were not members of the same body, united under the same head—Christ Jesus? You all know that there is too much of this to be witnessed amongst us. Those whom you love, you probably respect. But this is not sufficient. Your friends are not the only ones united in the same body, and for whom you are to have respect. For, as our blessed Saviour says, (Matt. v.) *If you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? do not even the publicans the same? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? do not also the heathens the same?* Your love and respect must extend to all and every member of the body, according to its rank; for thus only can it be said that you are of one heart, and one mind one towards another.

When I speak of the obligation of your being united together in one body, as you are in one fold, I do not say that all others, who are not of this fold, are to be considered as separated from you, and unworthy of your affections. All mankind are your brethren in Christ, and are to be treated as such. Our blessed Saviour inculcated the obligation of universal charity: and it is not for his minister to include it within limits. But although all mankind are to share

in our affections, a particular regard is due to our fellow-members. It is according to nature that a man should love and cherish the members of his own body more than the members of another person : and yet not be wanting in his attention to that person. In the same manner, a Christian may and ought to cherish and love the members of that spiritual body, of which he forms a part, and yet be liberal and attentive to others, who are not members of that body. It is in this sense that St. Paul says : *Whilst you have time, do good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of faith.* (Gal. vi.)

— Be attentive, therefore, to this part of your duty. Preach up the sanctity of your religion, by your mutual love for one another, for thus shall men know that you are the disciples of Christ. Be compassionate and charitable towards all : but towards your brethren, act as if you looked upon them as your fellow-members, and as component parts of one and the same spiritual body.

Hitherto, my remarks have extended only to the duty of observing the rules of peace and union with all your brethren collectively as a body. It remains for me to examine how you are to be of one mind one towards another in the circle of your own families, and in your communications with friends and acquaintance.

If peace and amity are more obligatory in one place than in another, it is undoubtedly in the circle of your own families. There you are in

the midst of those, who are *flesh of your flesh, and bone of your bone*. (Gen. i.) There you are in the midst of those, whom you are bound; by the ties of nature, to love, to cherish, to support, to bear with, and to be united, in the strictest bands of harmony and good-will. There it is, where peace and concord are of the most serious importance : for, unless peace and concord reign, you can expect no happiness in this life ; nor can the offending party reasonably expect any happiness in the next.—Oh ! if it is an essential point of christian duty, to be united in peace and love with those, with whom you have now no other tie than of being members of the same spiritual body, how much more essential is it, that you should be united in the strictest bands with those, who are members, as it were, of your own flesh, and that not the least sign of disunion be witnessed between you.

Nevertheless, how frequently is it that we witness the very reverse of that which the law so strictly enjoins ! How frequently does the husband treat his wife with harshness and disdain, and the wife retort upon him with anger and contempt ! How frequently does the husband run into excess, and the wife, by her ill-timed reproofs, excite his anger, and drive him into still greater excesses ! How frequently has the husband his will, and the wife hers, and, instead of yielding amicably to each other, both strive to attain the object which they have in

view, if not by open violence, at least by private means.— Oh ! my brethren, you, I mean, who are engaged in the state of wedlock, knowing, as you do, the duties of that holy state, let it be your determination to be united together in one mind, as you are in one body. Let it be your determination always to keep up that harmony and good understanding, as is always maintained between Christ and his Church, of which matrimony is the figure.— You certainly wish for domestic happiness ; and you know that this happiness cannot be obtained, unless there exist between man and wife an union of sentiment and reciprocal love. Be guided, therefore, in the whole of your conduct, by reason and discretion. Suffer not passion to have any influence over you, even on the most trying occasions. On the contrary, be compassionate to each other's failings. Bear each other's burdens. Let the weaker vessel know when to yield to the superior understanding, or power of her master and head : and let the stronger vessel know how to exercise his power, and his right, without hurting the feelings of his helpmate, and without assuming the air of a tyrant, who is resolved to be obeyed. Let each be ready to yield to the other, rather than give occasion to jarings and strife. When anger appears to be rising in the breast of either party, let the other endeavour, by mild expostulation, or by silence, to still the rising storm. In a word, let all be peace be-

tween you, and let the spirit of piety and love cause you to arrange all your communications according to the rules of wisdom, goodness, and justice.

There is an union of good-will, which, likewise, ought to exist between you and your friends and acquaintance. Although there is not so binding a connection between you and them, as there is between the members of one family, yet there is a connection of a stronger tie than there is between you and others of the christian body; and consequently the rules of brotherly love between you and them ought to be more strictly observed. You have all many friends, and many acquaintance. When you are in their company, you probably behave with a certain degree of respect, and treat them with that degree of decorum which the nature of your connection requires. This is all very well. But in what manner do you treat them in their absence? This is the essential point of the law: for by due attention to this, is to be ascertained whether your love and friendship be real or counterfeit. Now, a real friend will always treat his friend with the same respect and affection in his absence, as in his presence; he will not carry two faces: he will be always the same. I speak here of pious friendship: for, God forbid that a man, and a Christian, who is united in friendship with a man who is a libertine and a profligate, should be required to take part with this friend, and endeavour to

vindicate his excesses, when they are condemned by others.—But, without speaking of profligate friends, how often do we witness a line of conduct pursued by Christians towards friends and acquaintance, whose character is far from being notoriously vicious, very different from what I have described? How many are there who treat their absent friends, or at least those whom they would call friends when present before them, with a certain kind of contempt and disdain? How often is it that they scrutinize their words and their actions, and loudly condemn every thing in their conduct that seems to be amiss? How often do they attribute imaginary failings to them? How often do they call in question their intentions, even in the good works that they perform: and at the moment, perhaps, when the recording angel is registering them in the book of life, these false friends, and pretended Christians, are construing them in a wrong sense, and declaring them to be the works of vanity and hypocrisy. This is no new thing. Every one, that has the least acquaintance with the corrupted ways of the world, has had opportunities of remarking, that there are men who will speak in this manner of their absent friends, although, in their presence, they will speak amicably to them, and treat them with as much respect, and seeming friendship, as if they were truly united to them in the christian bands of amity and good-will.—But, my

brethren, what does my ministry require that I should say of conduct like this? That I should severely condemn it: and however severe my censures may be, you may depend upon it that they will not be worthy to be compared with the severity of the sentence, which will be hereafter pronounced upon those unhappy Christians, who have acted in this manner, who have neither done penance for their crimes, nor made reparation to their injured brethren.

Ah! my christian brethren, reflect seriously on these subjects. If, on examination, your conscience accuses you of transgressing in any of these things, now is the time to make reparation, and to do penance. If you have not hitherto been all of one mind one towards another according to Jesus Christ, now at least banish all dissension. Love all mankind in God and for God: love them as your fellow-creatures. Love those, in particular, who *are of the household of the faith*, and who are united with you in the same body, and under the same head. Live in the strictest bonds of harmony and concord with those of your own house; and transgress not the amiable laws of friendship, either in public or private, present or absent, in your dealings with those, whom you call your friends and acquaintance. Conduct yourselves, henceforward, in this manner, because such is the will of your sovereign Lord and Master.—Then you will comply with the

precept of the apostle. Then you may, with propriety, present yourselves together before his holy altar, because you will then be prepared, with one mind and with one mouth, *to glorify God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* And then, you may reasonably look forward, and expect to be united with these your brethren in the abodes of peace, the mansions of the eternal Sion.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

AGAINST DELAY OF REPENTANCE.

I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness ; make strait the way of the Lord..... JOHN i. 23.

THESE, my brethren, were words addressed to the Jews by John the Baptist, to admonish them of the approaching manifestation of the Messiah, and to exhort them to make strait his ways, in order that no obstacle might be opposed to the success of the great and important change, which he was to work amongst them.

The same words are addressed to you at this time by your holy mother the Church; and they are addressed to you for the same important purpose.—The coming of your Lord is at hand. The time is fast approaching, when he will expect to find a place prepared for his spiritual birth in your souls. At his first coming into this world, no room was found for him at the inns, or public places, not even amongst his friends and relations. A poor stable alone was

found to shelter him from the inclemency of the weather, and to echo back his first sighs for the redemption of mankind. Imitate not, my brethren, the unhappy Bethlehemites. Make strait his ways, at this holy time, and prepare a proper place in your souls for his reception.

It is not, indeed, a John the Baptist, who delivers this important summons to you, on this occasion. Such a messenger is not sent in these times. But, I am commissioned by the same power, and am invested with as great authority as was the Baptist, to cry out to you: *Make strait the way of the Lord.* Yes, my brethren, in quality of your pastor, sent to you by the same authority which sent the apostles, or even the Baptist himself, I am empowered and enjoined to announce to you, that it is now time to arise, and to prepare the way of the Lord; listen to the awful summons, and be ready to obey it.

Prepare ye the way of the Lord. But what is it, to *prepare the way of the Lord*? You have only to consider *why* you were sent into this world, and whether you have hitherto devoted your existence to that purpose, and you will be able to give a satisfactory explanation of the sentence.—The reason *why* you were sent into this world, is not to be ascertained by the ways or opinions of the generality of mankind. You were not sent here merely to labour for your daily bread, or to seek after the gratifications of the flesh.—You were not sent here for the

purpose of rioting in luxuries, amassing riches, or exalting yourselves above others.—You were not sent here for the purpose of arraying yourselves in gay attire, seeking admiration, or forming a permanent abode in this land of exile. For none of these purposes were you sent. No: my brethren, you were sent for very different purposes. You were sent for the express purpose of approving your fidelity to God, by making him and his law the great object of your attention and love.—You were sent here as into a land of exile, with an injunction, not to tarry in the same place, but to make the best of your way through the desert to your true home, the abode of Sion.—This was the sublime object, which induced the Almighty to bring you into existence: and if you have hitherto devoted your existence to this object, you have answered the end of your creation, and have prepared the way of the Lord in truth.—But, if your lives have not been spent in this manner; if, instead of seeking God, you have followed the corrupt ways of the world, then, *to prepare the way of the Lord*, is, to do penance for your sins, to forsake all your evil ways, and to fix your affections on God alone for the time to come.

From this short explanation the lowest capacity may understand the meaning of the sentence, which is addressed to you.—The next point is, to apply this sentence to yourselves, whether you have hitherto prepared the way of the Lord from your infancy by a life of inno-

cence; or whether, after having transgressed, you have repaired your faults by sincere repentance and amendment? To the first, that is, a life of perfect innocence, none of us can make a title. *We have all sinned*, as St. John says, and we all *need the glory of God*. *If any man say he has no sin, he deceiveth himself, and the truth is not in him.* (1 John i.)—As to the second, namely, bringing forth fruits worthy of penance, so much depends on the nature of the transgressions of which we have been guilty, that each one must look to himself, and examine impartially, whether he has done penance in proportion to the crimes of which his conscience accuses him, and whether he has effectually relinquished them.

Many of you, whom I am now addressing, have probably transgressed grievously against the laws of God, and have transgressed many times: and, moreover, have done little hitherto, towards making satisfaction, and repairing your faults. To you, the pressing summons of this day's gospel, is particularly applicable. To you I cry, with all the earnestness of my soul: *make strait the way of the Lord*. Begin, now at least, to bring forth fruits worthy of penance. Begin without delay, for the Lord is nigh. Begin immediately to flee from the wrath which is to come; and which, perhaps, at this moment is about to fall on your heads. Suffer no pretexts to cause you to put off this great work to another day. This day is

yours. To-morrow, perhaps, time may be no more for you. And, who shall make you amends, if your repentance comes too late, even although it were but for a moment ?

Many, however, we may presume there are amongst you, who have not transgressed in this grievous manner. But, even to these I say, *prepare the way of the Lord*. Although you have not walked openly in the ways of iniquity, can you say that you are without sin ? or can you say, that there is no sin in your past life for which you have not done condign works of penance ? Is there one amongst you who can say, that he has spent a single year without transgressing many ways ? Or who can say, that of these years one single month has elapsed without his committing many sins ? We may go farther, and say, how seldom has it been, that any of us, including myself with you, at the conclusion of a single day, could address these consoling words to himself, "thank God, I have spent this day well. I have not transgressed either in thought, word, or deed. I have kept myself in his presence as I ought to do. I have been perfectly resigned to his will. I have not sought after the things of this world with great eagerness, nor have I fixed my affections on them more than becometh a good christian. I have mortified myself by several acts, and by a general spirit of self-denial and penance. I have behaved towards my neighbours with meekness, uprightness and justice. I have not spoken

a single word to the prejudice of any one. In a word, my conscience, after minute examination, does not accuse me of a single deliberate fault. For one day, at least, I hope I have been a good christian. For one day, I hope that I have walked in the footsteps of my crucified Jesus, and have added nothing to the treasure of wrath, which I have unhappily accumulated during the former part of my life."—How seldom has it been, my brethren, that any of us could hold this consoling language to himself at the termination of the day? And what conclusion are we to draw from it? No other, than that the number of days, during the many years of our past lives, which have not been spent without sin, is immense: and that it is incumbent on us all to prepare the way of the Lord without delay. Oh! what an account will be required of us hereafter, if we do not make reparation for the past, and amend for the time to come!

My brethren, it is a business of the most serious importance to examine into all these things. The accounts, indeed, between us and God will not be finally adjusted till the great accounting day. But it is our interest to examine into them, and make them strait, as far as lies in our power, before that day arrives. And the reason is, because, if we are then found wanting, there will be no possibility of making up the deficiency. It is our interest, therefore, to examine beforehand. It is our interest to

inspect both the debtor and the creditor account. It is our interest to do, as a prudent man would do in his temporal accounts, that is, to endeavour, not only to gain sufficient to pay our debts, but to have a balance in our favour. Oh! with what earnestness does the man of business attend to this important point! And what a lesson ought his conduct to be to us!

This being the general way with the children of the world, ought the children of light to be less wise in their generation? Do we not know that, on the right ordering of our spiritual accounts, a much greater stake depends,—a stake, which is nothing less than a kingdom of immortal glory? The Lord is at hand, ready to call us to an account of our stewardship. He has entrusted talents to us, and these talents he expects to receive back with a proportionate increase. If we have misapplied these talents, or have not put them to profit in the manner that we ought to have done: or, if we have squandered them away in the pursuit of idle and unprofitable pleasures; and he should call us to book before we had made good the deficiency, what are we to expect, but that we shall be sentenced to those dungeons of terror and darkness, where *no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth*, and from whence there will be *no release till we have paid the last farthing*.

If, then, an earnest solicitude is felt by men to put their temporal affairs in order, how much greater reason have we, as christians, to be

solicitous to arrange our spiritual matters in such a way as to escape the dreadful consequences attendant on neglect! Oh! my brethren, losing a crown of immortal glory, and incurring the sentence of eternal torments in the bottomless abyss, is a subject, which ought to occupy your thoughts much more frequently and seriously than many of you seem to be aware of. What will this world profit you, if you lose your souls? What consolation will it be to you in your torments, to know that you have provided well for your families, if you know at the same time that the way by which you provided for them, was the way which led you to perdition? What satisfaction will it be to you to reflect that you succeeded well in business, if you are conscious that, in order to ensure this success, you neglected your spiritual duties, fixed your affections inordinately on the world, forgot your God, and lost your soul? Oh! be wise whilst you have time.

We have, undoubtedly, a merciful God to deal with, and who is able and willing to remit to us the sum of ten thousand talents, provided that we comply with his ordinances. But this is only during the term of our mortal lives. After death, we shall experience that he is a severe judge, and that he will exact from us even to the last farthing. Examine, therefore, seriously and attentively the years of your past life. If it be, that there have been few days, during these many years, which you have spent

in such a manner, as to incur no deliberate guilt either in thought, word, or deed, how numerous must be the days in which there have been deficiencies of one kind or another! And what is it that they amount to? Oh! this is a point, which we shall never be able to clear up with any degree of accuracy. All that we can say is, that our debts are great, and, in all probability, far exceeding what we expect them to be.

But, may we not flatter ourselves with the hopes that we have regularly discharged, or, at least, were favoured with a remission of these debts, as often as we had recourse to the sacraments? If our faults have arisen more from the infirmity of human nature, than from the corruption of the heart, or, if our sins have been grievous, and we have been sincerely contrite and have done penance for them, and renounced them for the time to come, we may certainly indulge the hope, that a regular discharge was given to us, at least, as far as relates to the eternal punishment. But, what is to be said of those, who live under the dominion of corrupt nature?—who fall frequently, and with little remorse, into the grievous sins of swearing, cursing, lust, intemperance, hatred, passion, defamation, and the like?—whose sorrow never reaches the heart, and whose seeming repentance is confined to a few hours?—whose endeavours to amend cease as soon as tempta-

tion comes on them again, and whose general tenor of life is to be computed, not from their conduct during the few days previous to their receiving the sacraments, but from their conduct at other times? Of these what are we to say? Ah! reason itself seems to say, that there is cause to fear that no part of their debt is discharged. The Almighty looks to the heart: and he is not to be deceived by false appearances. Although the sincerity of repentance does not necessarily depend upon extent of time, nevertheless it supposes something more than the transitory sensations of shame or remorse which are usually felt on approaching the sacred tribunal. The wicked servant, who owed his master ten thousand talents, fell down at his feet with all humility, and with most earnest supplications besought mercy. But the sequel proved that he was influenced merely by self-love. No mercy would he show to a fellow-servant, whose supplications to him were as earnest, as those which he himself had so lately poured forth: and the consequence was, that the pardon granted to him was revoked, and judgment without mercy was his portion. — This, my brethren, clearly proves that repentance, founded merely on self-love, will not find acceptance with God. It proves that, however earnest our supplications for mercy may be, we shall not obtain mercy, unless we have

begun, or are resolved to begin without delay to love God above all things, and our neighbours as ourselves.

My brethren, look then well to yourselves. There is no time to be lost. The day of the Lord is at hand. Make haste, and prepare his ways, lest he come upon you suddenly: lest he come upon you as a thief in the night. Reflect, that they only are called *blessed*, who, *when the Lord cometh, are found watching*. (Luke xii.) Remember that they alone are admitted into the marriage chamber, who are found with oil in their lamps. (Matt. xxv.) Suffer not yourselves, therefore, to be imposed upon by the deceits of your mortal enemy. You have a great deal to do: and, if you do not take advantage of the present time; ere long, perhaps, time may be no more for you. You cannot be too early, nor too earnest in your endeavours. Say not that you will wait till this or that business is concluded; or, till a more favourable opportunity presents itself. You know not that you will live even till to-morrow; much less do you know that you will live till the appointed time arrive. And even, were you assured of this, you have no certainty that obstacles as great, or greater than these, will not be thrown in the way, and tempt you to delay the work still longer. You have only this certainty, that your debts to the divine Justice are great,—that you may be

called to give up your accounts at a moment's notice,—and that, if every thing be not made strait before you appear at the tribunal of your Judge, the last farthing will be exacted from you with the most rigorous severity. This is all that you have any certainty about. Why then delay for another moment? You have it in your power now to profit by the merits of Christ, and by bringing forth fruits worthy of repentance, to overbalance the account that is standing against you, and to lay up treasures in heaven. Why then delay?

Many delude themselves with the idea that they shall be able to arrange all things, when they are laid on the bed of death. But, my brethren, how vain are all such calculations! The love of God is an essential ingredient of true repentance. And can it be supposed that there is any of the love of God to be found in those persons, who call upon God for mercy, merely because they are dying?—who engage to renounce sin, merely because the time is come when they can sin no longer?—who cry aloud for mercy, merely because they are called to give an account of their stewardship, which they know they are not prepared to give? No: my brethren, this will not do. It is not in this manner that you expect to settle temporal concerns, when you become involved: nor will it do in spirituals. In the one, payment is expected to be made in sterling value; and in the

other, nothing will be accepted, unless it be stamped with the love of God, either incipient or perfect.

Delay not, then, now that you are in health and strength—now that you have it in your power to choose between good and evil, between the love of God, and the love of the world. You may do a great deal in a short time. Your Lord is bountiful, and rich in mercies. He looks more to the will, and to the affections, than to the multiplicity of your good works, or to the duration of your course of penance: or, in other words, (for it is expedient to explain my express meaning on this subject) the moment that your will is made subservient to his, and your heart, softened by true repentance, is centered in him, he will receive you into favour, and cancel your debts, as was witnessed in the case of Mary Magdalen, and the penitent thief. After which, he will cause to be enregistered in the book of life all your subsequent acts of contrition, and all your good works, not merely as propitiatory, but as meritorious of an eternal reward. In this sense it is, that God has declared that he will never *despise a contrite and humble heart*, (Ps. l.) and that he will receive the sinner at whatever hour he returns to him.

Delay not, then, my brethren, I exhort you, with all the earnestness of my soul, delay not. *The day is far spent. The night is at hand, in which no man can work.* Set about the important business immediately. And then, although

it should happen that the time, between this and the arrival of the awful summons, may be too short to allow you to do as much, as in your fervour you proposed to do, you may entertain the comfortable assurance that the remission of your debts has not been withheld, but that a crown of glory will be in readiness for you in the land of the living, through the merits and mercies of your Lord and Saviour.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

ON THE CHRISTIAN'S PREPARATION FOR THE
SECOND COMING OF OUR LORD,
AT THE HOUR OF DEATH.

Prepare ye the way of the Lord: make his paths straight.....
All flesh shall see the salvation of God..... LUKE iii. 4, 6.

THE time, my brethren, is at hand, when the annual commemoration of the accomplishment of the words of my text, will engage your attention.—During this time of Advent, the church, like a tender mother, has exhorted you to prepare for the coming of your Father, your Lord, and your God. She has admonished you that it was now time to arise from sleep, for that the Lord was nigh. She has urged you, by the most pressing solicitations, to prepare his ways, and to make his paths straight.

These have been her endeavours. The same endeavours she made in ages past, and in every age from the time of the coming of the Son of

Man, and her endeavours contributed to induce her children to prepare for the second coming of their Lord and Judge, when he shall summon them before his awful tribunal at the moment of their departure out of this world.

This, in fact, is the great object of the church in all her festivals. It is her wish to impress on your minds a sense of gratitude to God for the ineffable blessings, which have been purchased for you by the incarnation and death of his Son. It is her wish to allure you, as it were, into the ways of piety, by the lovely charms which the promises of an incarnate Deity hold out to your view. It is her wish to convince you, that sin is the most enormous of all evils, by describing the humiliations, the poverty, the sufferings, and the agonizing tortures which were endured by him, who, for your sake, rejected the joys set before him, and embraced the cross.—With the view to enforce her wishes by the sentiments of fear, and to make an impression on those of her children, who, by being too much wedded to the world, are incapable of being moved by the finer feelings of gratitude and love for God, she, in the beginning of this holy time, held out to their view the terrors of that great day, which is to close the existence of mortality. She wished to impress on their minds the awful truth, that the day of the Lord is at hand, and that, although the final dissolution of the world may be far distant, the terrors of the last day

will come upon every soul at the moment of her separation from the body. To these I will briefly address myself in this discourse. May the God of mercy give efficacy to my words, that they may rouse the tepid and the indolent, and may inspire them with those sentiments of *fear*, which are termed by the spirit of God, the *beginnings of wisdom*.

With you, therefore, my brethren, it may justly be said that the world will end, the moment that your soul is separated from the body; and that then, you will experience all those terrors, which, according to the scriptures, will be felt by men at the last day. Then it is, that the Son of Man will appear to you in great power and majesty. Then it is, that the books will be opened, and a severe scrutiny made into all your thoughts, words, works, and omissions. Then it is, that the sentence either of reprobation, or election, will be passed on you, and your eternal doom irrevocably fixed.

The day of your death, therefore, is to you that day of anger and calamity, that great and bitter day, which ought to fill every christian with dismay, and induce him effectually to prepare the way of the Lord, and to make his paths straight, whilst yet there is time for that great and arduous performance.

When this day will come upon you, it is not in the power of man to ascertain. It may be many years hence. It may not be one year. It may not be one month. It may not be one

week. Thousands of your fellow-creatures will be dead before this day week, many of whom expect it as little as you yourselves now do. Neither youth nor robustness of constitution is any security. The young and the healthy are taken off at a short notice, as well as the aged and infirm. The scythe of death cuts down the blooming flowers, as well as the withered grass. There is no security for any one.

The situation, therefore, of every one of us, whether young or old, healthy or infirm, is a very critical situation. The day of the Lord may come upon us without any notice at all. This night we may lay ourselves down to rest, in confident expectation of rising to our usual occupations in the morning, and, in the dead of sleep, we may receive the awful summons to appear instantly before the tribunal of our Judge, and to hear the dread sentence, which is to decide our lot for eternity. Yes, my brethren, you may each individually say to yourselves: "perhaps before to-morrow's sun is risen, I may be called to stand before the God who made me, where I shall behold the terrors of his majesty, and experience that he is a God, who willet not iniquity." There is no human probability, indeed, that this will be the case with any individual amongst us. But it may possibly be the case with one or the other. It has been the case with thousands, who reckoned as little on the probability of its happening to them, as we do ourselves. Let us, therefore,

profit by the sad experience of others, and prepare the ways of the Lord, that, whensoever he shall call upon us, we may be found watching.

This, my brethren, is the awful situation, in which you are placed. Even in the midst of your pleasures and jollities, when sorrow and pain seem to be the farthest removed from you, it may be said that you are sporting on the brink of eternity, and that you know not the day, nor the hour, when you shall enter into it. Your eyes are blindfolded. You cannot discern one single object before you: and you are impelled to march forward, not knowing but the very next step you take, may be down the unfathomable precipice.

Oh! my brethren, to reflect upon this awful truth is sufficient to strike terror into the breast of the most hardened sinner. For my own part, I am filled with dismay at the thought. I know that the judgments of God are unsearchable, and that he judges justice itself. And were this God of justice to call me suddenly away, as he has called thousands of others, what account should I be able to give of all my thoughts, words, works, and omissions! Should I be able to answer one thing in a thousand?

—Oh! my brethren, the most imminent danger is hanging over our heads. Our souls are at stake. In one instant, we may be eternally separated from all that is good. In one in-

stant, we may be precipitated into the gulf of a miserable eternity.

It is not my wish, however, to overwhelm you with terror and dismay. It is not my desire to cause you to wither away with fear and expectation of what may come upon you. I have a far more profitable object in view. My wish is, to convince you of the danger of your state:—to awaken you out of the sleep of tepidity and sloth, in which so many thousands spend their days;—and to induce you to labour strenuously, whilst you have time, in preparing the way of the Lord, and in making straight his paths. The ministers of the altar are clothed in purple (the colour adopted by the church for penitential times) on purpose to remind you that it is now time to mourn over your past irregularities. She has appointed days of fasting, on purpose to encourage you to commence the arduous task of penance, in union with all her children. The lessons which she has appointed to be read in the mass, are exhortations to prepare the way of the Lord, and admonitions that the Lord will quickly come, and that all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

Rouse yourselves, my brethren. It is time to arise from sleep, for the time is at hand when no man can work. The mercies of God have hitherto spared you. They have warded off the stroke of death, and purchased for you

time to make your reconciliation with his offended justice. They have spared you, when thousands of others have been cut off, and perhaps in their sins. And why have these mercies been extended to you, in preference to so many others? Why has he had patience with you? For no other reason, than that, out of his excessive love, he wishes to give you time for repentance, that your salvation may be secured. Despise not, then, the riches and the mercies of the goodness of God. This Advent is, probably, the last Advent that many of you will see. Be wise, therefore, and prevent the anger of God, which will inevitably fall upon you, if you continue obstinate in your sins.

We may hope, indeed, that there are many in this assembly who have been endeavouring, for a length of time, to prepare the way of the Lord, and by sincere repentance to work out their salvation. We may hope, likewise, that there are many, who have never been obstinately rebellious in the ways of sin. Nevertheless, I address myself to all, and say; *be wise, whilst you have it in your power to be wise.* The most innocent, and the most penitent amongst you, are not yet perfect. You have either many virtues to bring to maturity, or you have not completely satisfied the justice of God for your past transgressions. You have all many imperfections to fight against, and to subdue, and many dangers to surmount, before your victory is complete. Applicable, there-

fore, to the most perfect amongst you, is the exhortation to be wise in time;—to labour strenuously, during this holy season, and to put yourselves in readiness for the coming of your Lord, when you shall be summoned to appear before his terrible tribunal.

But as for those, who are running on heedlessly, not indeed in the ways of gross immorality, but whose hearts are centered in the world, and whose solitudes are more excited by the desires of laying up for themselves stores in this miserable place of exile, than of preparing themselves for the good things of eternity, how much more reason have they to redeem the time, and to endeavour, now at least, to lay up stores in another world for their future well-being. How much more reason have they to be convinced that, unless they enter on a change of life, and do worthy acts of penance for their past transgressions, their souls will be exposed to the most imminent danger of being eternally lost.

You, who have been still more criminal, and have, not only neglected the service of God, for the sake of worldly gain or amusement, but have been addicted to profane swearing, to the excesses of intemperance, or to the shameful and disgusting sins of lust and debauchery, oh! let me exhort you, in the strongest terms that language can utter, to break your disgraceful bonds asunder, and restore your souls to the liberty of the sons of God. Be no longer held

in captivity. *Cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light.* You enjoy no pleasure now from the recollection of your past unlawful gratifications. You feel no internal satisfaction from the demerits of your past disloyalties. You do not pride yourselves on the ignominy of having carried the chains of slavery to sin, during the preceding years of your life. You do not look forward with hope to any thing consoling beyond the short period of your existence on earth. On the contrary, every thing condemns you. No sooner have you committed a crime, and have had time to reflect, than you severely condemn yourselves. Remorse preys on your minds. Wretchedness and misery are your portion. You tremble at the prospect of futurity. The declaration of St. Paul (1 Cor. vi.) that, *neither fornications, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate, nor liars with mankind, nor drunkards shall possess the kingdom of heaven*, fills you with terror and dismay. Your soul becomes a kind of hell to itself even in this life: and the anguish, that you feel, is but a foretaste of the horrors which will surround you for ever in the next.

Oh! my brethren, you, I mean, who spend your days unconcernedly in the state of sin, begin to think seriously. Take a proper view of your state, and be convinced that a greater act of folly and madness cannot be, than to live in a state of rebellion against God. What would you think of the man, who should deli-

berately consent to forfeit immense possessions, to submit to spend the remainder of his life in a dark and dismal dungeon, where he knew that he should have to endure every species of torture that human nature could endure, merely for the pleasure of clasping to his bosom a serpent, of whose beauteous colours he was enamoured,—a serpent, which he knew would inflict a deadly wound in his heart, the moment he embraced it? What words would be sufficient to express your abhorrence of such folly and madness? Nevertheless, this is the very act of which you yourselves are guilty, as often as you prefer the gratification of sin before the sweets of innocence. Innocence is a treasure indeed, far beyond all earthly treasures; and sin, however it may be decked exteriorly, is no better than a serpent, whose embraces will deprive you of all the riches of heaven, and consign you to misery and remorse in this world, and to the dungeons of eternal misery in the next.

Enter, therefore, seriously into yourselves, and be no longer the infatuated dupes of folly. Now is the time that you are particularly invited by your holy mother, the church, to enter on this great work. Take courage. Resolve immediately to renounce your sins. Begin to atone by repentance for your past offences, and prepare the way of the Lord by putting on the spirit of meekness and humility, the spirit of poverty and simplicity, the spirit of purity

and cleanness of heart, the spirit of peace and love. But see that you delay not. You have already put off your conversion too long. A longer delay may, perhaps, cost you all that is dear, for a never ending eternity. Act as if you knew that the last day of your mortal existence was at hand, and that the Lord was nigh. Listen to the voice of the church who admonishes you, that the clouds are about to open, and to rain down the Just One, and with him, the choicest blessings of the Almighty.

Open your hearts, therefore, to receive the dews of heaven. What is it that concerns your dearest interests more than this? Have you any thing more valuable than your souls? Is there any thing that you would take in exchange for them? Were they given to you for any other purpose, than to be prepared for the enjoyment of God? Is there any happiness greater, or more desirable than infinite and eternal happiness? Is there any misery more terrible, or more to be dreaded, than inconceivable and eternal misery? To all these questions you will all of you reply, without hesitation, that there is not. Why then delay? You are not masters of time. The continuance of life does not depend on your will. You may, as you have been frequently admonished, be cut off without an hour's warning. Or, you may, as thousands of others have been, be taken suddenly ill, and before you have time to make your peace with God, be deprived of your

senses, and continue in a state of delirious insensibility even to the end. Many sad examples of this kind have I witnessed, during the course of my ministry: and more shall I witness even amongst you, and perhaps before the conclusion of this year, if you continue deaf to my exhortations. Remember, that, if you neglect the day of your visitation, that day will probably never return to you again. Recollect, that, if you are not ready to open the door, when your Lord comes and knocks, he will go away; and go, where you will not be able to find him. And finally recollect that he will come like a thief in the night, when he is least expected.

Think, therefore, whilst you have time to think to the purpose. *Be wise, as it becometh you to be wise.* Then, you will have reason to bless the mercies of the Lord. Then you will prepare for the coming of your Redeemer in a becoming manner. Then you will be in a constant state of readiness, to go forth, with your lamps prepared, to meet your heavenly Bridegroom, at whatever hour his arrival shall be announced to you.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

ON THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

I bring you glad tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people; for this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David..... LUKE ii. 10, 11.

ON this day, my brethren, we are invited to return thanks to God for all the benefits which the birth of our Lord and Saviour has purchased for mankind. It is a day of spiritual joy and festivity to all the court of heaven, and it ought, with greater reason, to be the same to us. The angels rejoice; and they rejoice, because a *Saviour is born to us*: they rejoice on our account. They rejoice, because the gates of heaven are opened to us; because the sentence pronounced against us is reversed; because all the graces and blessings of divine mercy are purchased for us. *This day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David.*

With what ardent desires did the ancient patriarchs and prophets long to see this day! How was their piety inflamed, when they re-

flected that, in the fulness of time, the great, the Almighty, the eternal Word, would assume to himself human nature, and take up his abode amongst his creatures on earth. They dwelt on the future event in raptures. They could not find words to express their astonishment, their veneration, and their love.

We, my christian brethren, behold this day : and what are the feelings which the annual commemoration of it excites in our souls ? Are they the feelings of gratitude and love ? We ought to devote a considerable time to meditation on the incomprehensible blessings which this mystery has prepared for us : and can we say that it occupies any proportionate share of our thoughts ? Have we prepared our hearts, as they ought to be prepared, for him to come, and be spiritually born in us ? Are we disposed to rejoice at the recurrence of this solemnity, chiefly through motives of gratitude for the benefits of our redemption ?——Oh ! let us turn our thoughts to a subject, which so immediately concerns our eternal welfare. Let us run to the crib of Bethlehem: there let us fix our eyes on our infant Jesus, and contemplate the mystery of a God made man for our redemption. Let us dwell with raptures on the excess of his love towards us. But, at the same time, let us view with dismay the enormity of our sins, which could not be expiated at a less price than that of the incarnation and death of the Word himself incarnate.

After the lapse of about four thousand years from the creation of our first parents, the fulness of time arrived when the great promises were to take place. The Virgin had conceived, and borne for nine months in her womb, *the Expectation of Israel, the Desired of all nations*. The great Director of all things had predisposed that every circumstance, which had been foretold by the prophets concerning the birth of the Messiah, should be literally fulfilled, and fulfilled in silence, unknown to the great, the wise, the learned, or to the world. The veil of obscurity, which concealed from the understandings of men the application of the prophecies concerning the time and manner of his coming, concealed likewise the great event when it actually took place. It was his will that *faith*, and not the wisdom of the wise, should influence the minds of men in the belief of the mysteries of salvation.

We have seen all these great mysteries fulfilled. The words of the prophets are now clear and intelligible to us. Let us record the event: and let us open our souls to the warmest feelings of gratitude and love.—Although he was the great Lord and Master of all things, he chose a poor stable for the place of his birth: he chose the most inclement season of the year: he chose a time, when the least accommodation could be had, the least attention received. In the depth of winter,—in a town ever crowded with company,—in the middle of

the night,—in an open shed,—in a poor manger, the Almighty Word was born into this world. In the midst of silence, with no other attendants but his mother and reputed father, and an ox and an ass, the Prince of Peace, the long-expected Messiah, entered into the abodes of mortality.

Oh ! my brethren, let us pause and reflect on these humiliating circumstances attending the birth of the King of kings :—circumstances, which he himself chose, in preference to any other.—What ought to be our opinion of the wisdom of the world, when we behold the crib of Bethlehem ! What ought to be our ideas of the pride, pomp, and splendor of the great ones of the earth, when we behold the swaddling-clothes, the attendants, and the poverty of the Word Incarnate at his birth ! What ought we to think of the ways of those, who place their happiness in comfort and ease, who fly from every species of self-denial and suffering, who seek for riches and for nothing else, who despise poverty, and all of their fellow-creatures who are depressed by it,—when we behold our Lord and Saviour bereft of every comfort which this world can afford at the time of the greatest need, when sufferings are most acute, and comforts most wanting !

Ah ! truly may it be said, that the ways of God are the ways of wisdom—unsearchable I will allow,—but they are the ways of wisdom ; the ways, in which we ought to walk.—

Corrupted as our nature is, and blinded by the impetuous violence of passion, we are led to decide upon things from present appearances, without a reference to what is to come hereafter. Being formed for happiness, and the senses of our body bearing testimony that a certain kind of enjoyment is to be found in sensual gratifications, and worldly grandeur, we are led into the idea, that the happiness after which we crave, is to be enjoyed in them. But what is this but foolishness, as the scripture terms it? With the brute creation such reasoning would be just. But with man, it is folly. We have reason and experience, to teach us that happiness is not to be found in created things : and we have religion to inform us, that our abode here is only for a short time : that another world awaits us, where alone true happiness is to be found : and that, by the patient endurance of many tribulations, we are to prepare ourselves for it.—Vain, therefore, and foolish are all earthly pursuits, all earthly pleasures, which have no other object but sensual gratifications. Vain is the wisdom of the world, and foolish are the ways of worldly men. There is no wisdom but the wisdom of God : no way that can be followed with safety, but the way which reason and religion point out, and in which, for our example, our blessed Saviour began to walk, the very instant that he was born into this world.

Go, then, my brethren, to the crib of Bethlehem, and contemplate the circumstances of

your Saviour's birth. Go, and learn how to regulate your lives according to the model, which is there set before you. Go, and acquire wisdom, where true wisdom is to be found. The lessons which you will there receive, I acknowledge, will be very different from the lessons given by the world ;—they will be very humiliating to human pride, very painful to flesh and blood,—very grating to worldly self-love. But they will be lessons of wisdom,—lessons calculated to raise you above the world, enable you to subdue the weaknesses of human nature, lead you to comparative happiness here, and conduct you to perfect happiness hereafter.

Contemplate, in the first place, the state of poverty and want, in which your Saviour was born. He was not, like other infants, unconscious of the comforts that he might have enjoyed, had he been born in the midst of affluence. He knew his state ; and he knew the extent of the sufferings to which he had voluntarily submitted. Although his body was weak and helpless, like the bodies of other children, his soul was vigorous and strong ; and, united as it was to the Divinity, he felt sensibly all the inconveniences and sufferings of infancy. Oh ! where is the mind, that can form an adequate idea of what our Saviour and our Model endured in this state ! We naturally feel compassion for the sufferings of little innocents on their entrance into this world. Were we to hear the cries of the children of kings, we should feel for them,

although they were laid in cribs of down, and attended with the utmost care. But to witness the entrance into life of an infant born to poverty and want,—of an infant born in a poor hovel, in the most inclement season of the year,—in the middle of the longest night, at a time when no assistance could be had, no comforting things procured,—in a place where no fire could be made to administer warmth, or to prepare what is always wanted on those occasions:—Oh! were we to witness the birth of an infant in such a state, what would be our feelings? Should we be able to restrain the tears of compassion? And yet, after all, the sufferings of the poor babe would not be such as we figured to our imagination. Incapable, as it would be, of reasoning, it could not form an idea of the extent of its sufferings, nor know what it was to enjoy ease and comfort. It was not so with our blessed Saviour. He was born in this abject state; and at the time of his birth he enjoyed the perfect use of reason. He not only endured pain, but he knew what it was that he endured, and he knew that it was for love of you, and for your instruction in the ways of happiness, that he endured it. Oh! I say again, who can form a competent idea of what our infant Jesus suffered at the time of his birth. Ponder awhile, my brethren, on these his sufferings. Let them sink deep into your minds, and they will contribute to wean your affections from this transitory world. Address

the following soliloquy to yourselves : “ My Saviour voluntarily embraced a state of poverty and humiliation ; why then should I be perpetually seeking to exalt myself, or place my happiness in the accumulation of riches ? I know that I am obliged to labour for my support, and to maintain those who are committed to my charge : but why should I live, as if the only object of my existence was to heap up wealth, and amass stores ?—My Saviour submitted to sufferings of the most painful kind, even in the tenderest stage of life :—why then should I repine under pain and anguish in the days of my strength ? why should I fly with seeming eagerness from sorrows and distress ?—My Saviour submitted to a state of abandonment, with not a friend to comfort him, not a relation to notice him, and this even at his birth :—why then should I complain, if friends and relations refuse to notice me, or turn their backs upon me ? No : I will never more transgress in these things. I will patiently submit to whatever the will of God may appoint for me. With such an example before my eyes, I will hush every complaint, I will repress every sigh. The way of poverty, the way of sufferings, the way of humiliations, is the way which my Saviour embraced in preference to every other. It is consequently the way of wisdom—the way that leadeth to truth and life. In that way, therefore, I will walk for the time to come, notwithstanding all the allurements that may be

held out to me by the world, the flesh, or the devil."

In the second place, imagine to yourselves that you behold your Saviour lying in the cold manger, and consider his divine and eternal origin. He is the word of the Father, by whom all things were made. He was from all eternity. He was possessed of infinite happiness : and no power could wrest it from him. Nevertheless he descended, as it were, from his throne, he was made flesh, and dwelt as a little one amongst us.—Oh ! what a humiliation ! what a change was this ! Seated as he was at the right hand of his Father, in the quiet enjoyment of unspeakable and infinite bliss, he descended, as it were, from his throne, and took upon himself the infirmities, not merely of human nature, but of human nature in its lowest and most wretched state.—My brethren, it is impossible for us to ascertain the extent of this sacrifice. For although, according to his divinity, he was incapable of suffering pain, or experiencing any diminution of his former bliss, yet his union with our poor nature must have been attended with a something which we can neither express nor conceive. It must have been a humiliation, far exceeding any humiliation which it was possible for either man or angel to endure. His union with our nature being of that intimate kind, as to form only one person, we are authorized to say, that he became a man of sorrows, and acquainted with

infirmity, and that, although he suffered as a man, yet he was a God. Oh ! my brethren, look at your infant Saviour : contemplate his origin : contemplate his sacrifice : contemplate his sufferings. Remember, that he voluntarily reduced himself to this state for the love of you. Remember, that he not only submitted to the pains attendant on helpless infancy, but that he devoted himself to all the labours and sufferings of a life of three and thirty years, and finally to the ignominies and torments of the cross : and bear in mind, that his only inducement was the salvation of your souls. O let your minds dwell with raptures on this incomprehensible love of a God-man, and make such reflections as will contribute to promote the great object of his incarnation. Say to yourselves : “Why should I be so eager after honours and dignities, when I see my Saviour divesting himself, as it were, of every honour and dignity for the love of me ?—Why should I be so tenacious of a good name, when assailed by the tongues of defamation and scandal, or why be so desirous of esteem and applause, when I see my Lord and Saviour embracing indignities, and courting dishonour for the love of me ?—Why should I be sad and sorrowful, when deprived of a little pleasure, or so thoughtless and dissipated during the moments of festivity and mirth, when I behold my Saviour compromising, as it were, the joys of heaven, and making choice of sufferings for the love of

me? No : it shall be so no longer : I will walk in the footsteps of my Saviour, and promote the great object of his sufferings and love to the best of my power."

In the third place, enter into the interior of the heart of your infant Jesus, and take a more particular survey of his sufferings. He was not, like other infants, devoid of reason. By virtue of the omniscience of the Divinity, to which he was united, he knew all things, past, present, and to come. He foresaw, in the clearest light, every thing that he was to suffer during the thirty-three years of his mortality. He foresaw the ignominies and torments of the cross, and felt beforehand the pangs of death. The whips, the scourges, the thorns, the nails, the spear, were all present to his view : and the loud groan, with which he was to give up the ghost, already sounded in his ear. Dreadful as such a prospect must have been, particularly to a mind formed as ours is, yet it was the least part of our infant Saviour's sufferings. To all these he voluntarily submitted : although joy was set before him, he preferred the cross. There was another source of pain, and grievous was the torture which it caused in his soul. This was no other than the knowledge which he had, of the sins and ingratitude of his beloved creatures. The whole mass of iniquities, committed by the sons of men, were all present to his view. He saw your sins, and he saw mine. But what was most afflicting to his

mind, was the sight of the immense multitude of the reprobate—of those millions of millions, over whom he will have to pronounce, at the last day, that dreadful sentence, *Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire*. They were all present before his eyes : he saw their distorted looks, when the sentence was to be pronounced : he heard their unavailing shrieks and groans : and, burning as was his heart with love for every one of them, and ready as he was to suffer every torture and indignity for their salvation, the agony that he endured must have been far beyond any thing that it is possible for us to conceive.—What wonder, then, my brethren, that the tears trickled down his cheeks !

Oh ! let us go over to Bethlehem, in spirit, and, as the shepherds said one to another, let us see the word that is come to pass. Let us there contemplate our infant Saviour, and weigh the variety, and the extent of his sufferings. Let us attribute his sufferings to the real cause, and say to ourselves : “It is I who cause him to endure what he suffers. It is for me that he submits to these humiliations. I have committed sin ; and the guilt was so enormous in the sight of God, that it could never have been forgiven, had not his beloved Son come down from heaven for my salvation. He loved me : he willed not my destruction, but that I should be converted and live : and love has reduced him to this state. Yes : it is

for me that he sighs and weeps : and it will be for me that, at the appointed time, he will be nailed to the cross. Oh ! had I reflected duly on this, when temptation came upon me, should I have consented to sin ? should I have sought pleasure in the gratification of a moment, had I considered that it would have cost so great a price ? Alas ! the view of my past follies fills me with confusion. I will endeavour to do better for the time to come. Henceforward I will hate sin, and strive to make amends for the past, by superior attention and diligence. I will begin to meditate on the love of God manifested towards me, and labour to enkindle in my soul the flames of reciprocal love. In the midst of my confusion for past disloyalties, and my fears lest the judgments of an avenging God should fall upon me, how consoling, how encouraging are the words of the angel : *I bring you glad tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people, for this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David.*"

Let us, my brethren, meditate on these important subjects. Let us look seriously to ourselves, and endeavour to profit by his love in such a manner, as to repent sincerely of our past offences, and follow the ways of piety for the time to come. *A Saviour is born to us.* Let us go, and adore him : let us offer him our hearts ; let us be resolved to walk in his footsteps : let us be prepared to suffer with him,

Then we may confidently hope, that he will be truly a Saviour to us ; that he will redeem us from our sins ; and that, if we persevere to the end, he will admit us to the possession of that happiness, which he has purchased for us at so dear a rate.

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF
CHRISTMAS.

ON LABOURING FOR THE SANCTIFICATION OF
OUR SOULS.

*This child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of
many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted.*

LUKE ii. 34.

THE prophetic words of Simeon, my brethren, which I have selected for my text, and which form a part of the gospel read on this Sunday, are words, which may be applied, not only to those of the children of Israel who obstinately opposed the ministry, the doctrines, and the mission of our great Messiah, but likewise to those among Christians, who, although they acknowledge his divinity, live in opposition to his maxims and laws. Of these the number has been great in every age, and it is not diminished in these our times. As it was in the times of the old law, so likewise it is in the times of the new : *many are called, but few are chosen*. The mercies of the Lord are offered to all, but few there are, comparatively speaking, who choose to embrace

them, and make them contribute to their eternal welfare. During the days of our Lord's sojourning on earth, these mercies were particularly proffered to the then chosen people, the Jews. The number that embraced them was comparatively small : and truly was it foretold of them, that *this child was set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel*. Among Christians the case is nearly the same; for although all believe that he is the Messiah, yet their lives are in such direct opposition to his holy laws, that it may be said of them, that he is set for the fall as well as for the resurrection of many.

I cannot occupy your attention on this day more appropriately, nor with greater benefit to yourselves, than by enlarging on these prophetic words as applicable to Christians, and particularly applicable to you who are here assembled. For this purpose, I propose to you the following question : " Is this child set up for your fall, or for your resurrection ? " A direct answer to this question I do not expect that any of you are prepared or are authorized to give. You all, undoubtedly, hope that he is set up for your resurrection. But, whether he is or not, will not be known till you have proved your fidelity to him, by persevering to the end of your course in the faithful discharge of the duties of a christian life.

Is there, however, a probability that you will give this testimony of perseverance ? If you

faithfully comply with all your spiritual duties at the present time, you may reasonably entertain a hope that you will continue on. But even then, there would be no certainty : for, so great is the infirmity of human nature, that the Christian has reason to proceed always with fear and trembling, lest, in an unguarded moment, he should yield to the suggestions of concupiscence, and fall, to rise no more.— But, if you do not fulfil your duties at the present time, what reason have you to hope, that you will fulfil them at a future time ? You perhaps intend to enter on a change of life a while hence. But how many have formed the same resolution ? and how few have executed it ? If, therefore, you should not fulfil your duties at a future time, is there reason to entertain the most distant hope, that you will partake in the resurrection that has been purchased for you ? —Oh ! my brethren, these are serious subjects for your consideration. They have oftentimes been presented to you under different forms : but their importance is such, that they cannot be too deeply impressed on your minds, nor be too often proposed for your consideration.

St. Paul assures us, (Rom.v.) that *sin was not imputed, when the law was not. . . .* and, that *the law entered in that sin might abound.* Or, in other words, that when men were buried in the profoundest ignorance, and had not the possibility of acquiring a knowledge of the particular

laws of God, then their ignorance would plead their excuse, and cause that the sin should not be imputed to them. But that, when men were instructed, or had means in their power of being instructed in the laws of God, then every offence would be imputed to them, and that, in proportion to their knowledge, so much the more criminal would be their transgressions.

Now, let us apply this doctrine of St. Paul to ourselves.) Had we been buried, like our pagan ancestors, in profound ignorance of the laws of God, the transgression of them would not have been imputed to us. The laws of nature, those laws which are implanted in every human breast, would have been the only laws to which we should have been amenable. But, since the laws of God have been fully made known to us, and every principle of christian morality has been clearly explained to us, the consequence is, that every transgression is imputed to us, and that, if we do not live up to the knowledge we have obtained, sin doth more abound on account of the law entering into our minds, and our guilt is increased in proportion to our knowledge. It is to no purpose to compare ourselves with others, and to take credit to ourselves, when we discover reasons to suppose that we are less vitiated than they are. Our guilt is proportioned to our knowledge, and to the special favours we have hitherto received from God : and as we know not what others have received, we cannot ascertain the extent of

their guilt when they transgress, and consequently we cannot say that they are more criminal than ourselves. Let us rather look to our own state only: for, whether there are others more guilty than ourselves, or not, we shall be judged according to our own criminality, and sentence will be passed upon us accordingly.

Reflect, therefore, my brethren, on the responsibility, which is attached to the means of acquiring knowledge, which the Almighty has been graciously pleased to provide. He has entrusted talents to you, and he will exact a return of them with due interest. It will be no justifiable plea to a Christian, to say that he was ignorant of his duties, when means are placed before him of acquiring knowledge, and through idleness, or sloth, or indifference, he neglects to avail himself of those means. It will be no justifiable plea to a Christian, to say that instructions on the principal duties of morality made but a faint impression on his mind, because he was too much engaged in worldly things, or because he was too much in love with vanity, or sensual pleasures, to attend to such serious and uninteresting subjects. Pleas of this kind will be of no avail. Knowledge is imparted, or, at least, the means of knowledge, are provided for you, and if you refuse to profit by them, there is no plea, however strong, that can excuse you. Hitherto, perhaps, you have thought very little on the

important consequences attendant on hearing the word of God explained to you in sermons and catechetical discourses. — Hitherto, perhaps, you have thought very little on the consequences, which may result from your not attending at the Church of God when the scriptures are publicly explained, or from leaving your places and returning home, when your pastor is about to perform that very important part of his duties—and important, because it is of the utmost consequence to you.—I mean, when he is about to give his lectures on the catechism.—Hitherto, perhaps, when you have attended at sermons, and likewise have remained in your places, when the catechism has been explained, you have reflected but little afterwards on what you heard, and applied nothing to yourselves for the reformation of your lives; contenting yourselves with having heard the word of God, and not reflecting, that the doers of the word, and not the hearers only, shall be justified.—If your consciences accuse you of any of these neglects, be careful to correct them for the time to come. Remember, that this child is set either for your fall, or for your resurrection: and whether it is for your fall or resurrection, will entirely depend on your embracing the means of instruction, and putting them in practice.

Learn, then, the extent of your duties, for you have it in your power. In the first place, never absent yourselves from public instructi-

ons, unless necessity impels you. In the second place, pay every attention to the instructions which you hear, and treasure them in your memory, to the best of your power. When you hear any particular duty inculcated, with which you were hitherto unacquainted, or any command of God explained in a stricter sense than you had hitherto understood it; or any vice or criminal habit condemned, in stronger terms than you had hitherto considered it to deserve; or any virtue declared to be necessary for salvation, to which you had hitherto paid but little attention; take care and store these things in your mind. Having once received information, the plea of ignorance can have no weight in your favour. Store them, therefore, in your mind, and put in practice what you have heard: apply the instructions which you hear, to the due ordering of your lives. Endeavour, like the Royal Prophet, to *meditate on the law of God day and night: to have his holy word always before your eyes: to make it a lamp to your feet, and a light to your paths.* (Ps. cxviii. 105.)

Again, that this child may be set for your resurrection, it is required that you express your gratitude and love in a suitable manner, for the blessings which he has purchased for you. You are not like the Gentiles, who knew not God. Nor are you like the unbelieving Jews, who would not receive Jesus as their Messiah. You are fully convinced of the truths of the christian religion, and you know what

your God has done for you. You know that this child is the incarnate Son of the Most High God : you know that he is the Eternal Word, that he was in the beginning, that he was with God, and that he himself is God. You know that he was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us, for the sole purpose of saving your souls from eternal torments.—— This knowledge brings with it a responsibility on your parts ; it imposes the duty of serving and worshipping him as your God, and of renouncing every thing that is in opposition to his adorable will. Vice and excess are not the only things you are to renounce : for these were renounced by many of the pagan philosophers, who knew not God. Your morals must be christian morals : your lives must be christian lives. The duty imposed on you requires that you worship your God in spirit and in truth, that you love him with your whole heart, and that you serve him with your whole strength.

Be attentive, therefore, to these things. Look up to your Jesus as your model ; and from what he has done for you, learn the extent of the duties, which you owe to him. Be not satisfied with the insipid rules of pagan morality. Aim at something higher. Sanctify your souls by the virtues of true christian piety. Let not flesh and blood lead you away to sensual gratifications, or chain you down to earthly things. A crown is set before you : strive for it manfully : *run, not as at an uncertainty : fight,*

not as one beating the air : but chastise your flesh, and reduce it into subjection.—Be not discouraged by the prospect of difficulties or sufferings. Your Lord foresaw, before he took upon himself our nature, all the pains and agonies, which he would have to endure ; and yet, he hesitated not, but gave himself wholly for you, heedless of the consequences. Your salvation was more to him than momentary sufferings. Your eternal life was more dear to him, than the prospect of excruciating torture was dreadful. He sacrificed every thing for you.

This is a truth which you have known from your childhood. And can it be supposed that this knowledge does not bring with it a responsibility ? Can it be supposed that you may be allowed to be conscious of this excess of love on the part of God, and be suffered to live as if this knowledge had never been imparted to you ? Reason itself declares to the contrary. As it has been made known to you, that your Saviour gave himself wholly for you, the feelings of nature suggest the propriety that you should give yourself wholly to him. And, as you are convinced that he gave himself for you, notwithstanding that he foresaw the afflictions, which would fall upon him in consequence of it ; it ought to appear to you in the clearest light, that it is your duty to devote yourselves wholly to his love and service, although you may foresee that temporal losses, afflictions, and even death itself, will inevitably follow from it.

Situated therefore as we are, and with such important obligations imposed on us, how criminal must they be, who suffer worldly interest, temporal emoluments, or sensual pleasures, to take them away from the service of God! how criminal must they be, who suffer the solitudes and hurry of business, or the anxieties arising from poverty and want, to take off their thoughts from God, to cause them to neglect his service, to absent themselves from the place of worship, and to become as it were castaways, with their own voluntary consent! How criminal, again, must they be, who murmur under pains and afflictions, who repine under losses and privations, who are sad and sorrowful under contradictions and disappointments! Ah! my brethren, it is a truth, which it behoves you to weigh maturely, that the knowledge, which you possess, of the infinite mercies and love of God, and of the duties which are imposed on you in quality of Christians, will add doubly to your guilt, if you do not submit yourselves entirely, and give your hearts wholly to him, who gave himself wholly for you. Those unhappy men, upon whom the rays of Christianity have never beamed, will not probably be called to account for not practising the sublime duties of the gospel—they will be judged without the law. But you, who have inherited, as it were, a knowledge of the law, and from whom not one of the divine precepts has been concealed, will have no excuse

to bring forward, if you neglect to attain to that state of perfection in all virtues, which is compatible with your state of life.

Oh! labour then, my brethren, with all the earnestness of your souls, in the great work of your sanctification. Do not flatter yourselves with the idea that you are sufficiently virtuous, from the mere circumstance of your being more free from vice than the generality of mankind. Do not deceive yourselves, by the supposition that you do all that a Christian ought to do, merely because you regularly attend divine service, and perform your morning and evening devotions; or because you do not fall into the grosser sins of swearing, stealing, drunkenness, or impurity. A higher degree of sanctity is required of you, and unless you attain to that degree, your salvation will be exposed to danger. As Christians, you must not only abstain from vice, but your affections must be disengaged from the things of this world, and center in God, for he claims your whole heart.—As Christians, you must not seek yourselves only, but in a particular manner, and in preference to every thing else, the honour and glory of God. As Christians, you must fulfil, not only a part of your duties, but you must fulfil them all, and fulfil them with all the perfection in your power. And, finally, as Christians, you must endeavour constantly to advance in the ways of piety, and per-

severe in your endeavours even to the end of your lives.

Be earnest, therefore, my brethren, and bear constantly in mind, that the knowledge of the truth imposes on you obligations in proportion to your knowledge. And bear in mind likewise, that it is your duty to seek for knowledge, as often as opportunity occurs; for the plea of ignorance will not be admitted, when means of information have been provided, and have not been embraced.—Remember, that this child is set either for your fall, or for your resurrection. If you live not according to the knowledge that you possess, or that you had the means of possessing, he is very probably *set for your fall*, unless you make amends for the past by superior attention to your duties, and by sincere repentance. But if you have hitherto led truly christian lives, and have either preserved your innocence undefiled, or have regained the friendship of God by worthy fruits of penance, and shall persevere to the end, he is *set for your resurrection*, and his gifts will fructify in your souls, and lead you to the possession of him in the mansions of eternal bliss.

Be earnest, therefore, my brethren. Suffer no time to be lost. Another twelve months of your lives is nearly elapsed. One year flies away after another, and you know not which will be your last. Be solicitous, therefore, in

this most important of all your concerns. Put that time to profit, which you have yet to come. Do penance for your past transgressions. Seek for knowledge, by attending to all public instructions. Suffer not the world, nor private worldly concerns, to take off your attention from this great work. In a word, seek your own good : consult your own happiness : prefer the substance of happiness, which is to be found in the service of God, before the shadow, which alone is to be found in the service of the world : adhere closely to your own true Father and Friend, and renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh. Do this, and whatever difficulties you may have to encounter, you will easily overcome them : you will proceed in your career with joy : for, from the interior consolations that will be imparted to you, you will be convinced that the sufferings of this world are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in you, in the bosom of the Divinity, where a crown of justice is prepared for you, by Him, who alone is a just Judge.

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

ON THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW YEAR.

The grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men, instructing us that, denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly, and piously.

TITUS ii. 11, 12.

THIS comprehensive admonition of the apostle, the church addresses to us, on ~~this~~ day, to remind us of the great object of the incarnation of the Son of God;—to admonish us of the great duties, which every christian is commanded to perform;—and to encourage us to begin the new year with renewed fervour, and with redoubled diligence.

The old year is now no more. This old year, which, perhaps, times back, the time when I was first introduced to your notice, the greater number of you looked forward to as to a time, which they would probably never see, is now no more. It is come, and it is gone. ~~It is no more than as a dream.~~ You, however, still live. But how long will this life last? Will it last another twelve months? This is as totally un-

known to you, as it was to those, whom I addressed on this day last year, and who are now no more. Had I received an intimation who were the individuals of this congregation, who were to hear the awful summons to appear before their Judge, and they believed that my foreknowledge was from above, they would have prepared themselves for the event with christian piety and repentance. Was I prepared on this occasion, to mark out every individual amongst you, who have survived these many years, but who were to finish their mortal course during the next twelve months, and was I authorized and inspired to say, who amongst you would die in the present month, in the month of February, March, April, and the other months of the present year, what impression would it make on your minds?—This foreknowledge, ~~however, I do not possess~~ But this, I may say, judging from experience, that not one month of this year will pass ~~away~~, but one or more of you who are now assembled before me, will be summoned before your Judge, and hear the sentence which is to decide your eternal doom. None of you know to whom the summons will be sent. I myself am in an uncertainty as to my own lot. I may be of the number, and before many months, or even weeks are elapsed, I may be the subject, if I have been deserving of them, of your pious lamentations.

In this state of uncertainty, ~~and on this oc.~~

~~what~~, what can I recommend to you more opportunely, than the words of my text? You have hitherto been spared. But your years roll rapidly on. They succeed each other, as night succeeds to day. And if this year is not to be your last, and you take not advantage of the admonitions that are now, ~~and have been many years~~ given to you, let that year come when it will, it will probably find you in the same, or more probably, in a worse state than ~~what~~ you now are.

Have you, therefore, hitherto *lived soberly, and justly, and piously in this world, looking for the blessed hope, and coming of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ?* You will probably hesitate, before you make the assertion. But, in what have you been deficient? This is a fit subject for our examination. I will not recommend an examination of all the years of your past lives. That would be unnecessary, for many, I hope, have renounced the errors of their youth, and have begun, at least, to serve their God in sincerity and truth. I will take a review of the last year only, as being the best criterion of ascertaining your present state, and I will comprise in my examination, not individual thoughts, words, or actions, but the general tenor of your conduct,—how you have attended to the service of God,—how you have resisted temptation,—what passions you have subdued,—and what virtues you have acquired. These shall be the subjects of our examination. ✠

review of this kind will be of service to you, for it will show how matters stand between you and God.

The graces and inspirations, which you have received during the course of this last year, are innumerable. The Almighty has ~~favoured you in a particular manner.~~ He has heaped upon you blessings, which he has refused to thousands of others, who, perhaps, were more deserving in his sight, than you ~~were yourselves.~~—He has watched over you with ~~more than~~ parental care.—He pointed out to you every precipice, into which you were in danger of falling.—He forewarned you of all the perils, to which you have been exposed.—He never ceased to hold out his hand to uphold you in the hour of distress.—He has marked out to you, in the clearest manner, the path, in which you ought to walk, in order to secure your salvation.—He has, ~~by the ministry of your pastors,~~ imparted to you a competent knowledge of his holy laws:—he has importuned you to observe them faithfully:—he has reproved you, when you have suffered sloth, or indifference, or weakness to prevail over you, and lead you into sin.

These have been the effects of his paternal care and love for you, during the course of this last year. And in what manner have you corresponded with these his blessings? It was your duty to attend to his inspirations, and to acknowledge his blessings with the deepest sen-

timents of gratitude. You ought to have felt a holy hunger and thirst after his justice, and the fulfilment of his holy will. You ought to have put every thing to profit, and to have advanced daily in wisdom, in goodness, and in justice.—At the time, that he sent his ministers to impart his life-giving word to your souls, he admonished you of the obligation of attending to it. He expressly declared, that they were not blessed who merely heard the word of God, but that they were blessed who heard the word of God and kept it. He gave you to understand that you were to bring forth fruit, and that that fruit was to be a hundred fold. He admonished you of the danger of suffering the thorns and briars, the cares and solitudes of this world to choke the divine seed, and prevent you from bringing forth fruit in due season.—Now, in what manner have you corresponded with these blessings during this last year? Have you followed the inspirations, and put to profit the instructions imparted to you, ~~in the manner that you ought~~? Have you brought forth fruit to the extent required of you?—How few are there amongst you, my brethren, who can reply in the affirmative to these questions! The greater number, I fear, so far from regulating their conduct according to the model set before them, paid little or no attention to the voice of God. Who amongst you, for example, can call to mind the substance of the instructions which you received on Sunday last? or, who amongst

you, has once thought of putting in practice the lessons delivered to you on that occasion?—Oh! my brethren, remember that the word of God is a blessing; and that, if that blessing be not put to a good use, it is abused; and that, for every time you are guilty of this abuse, you will be called to a strict account. Remember, that the servant, who is frequently reminded by his master of the duties which he is to perform, and is frequently admonished of the faults, which he has committed, and yet, continues on in the same course, paying no attention whatever to his master's words, remember, I say, that that servant shall be punished with many stripes, as the scriptures declare, (Luke xii.) and shall forfeit the title of being a faithful servant—the only title, on which he can put in his claim to an immortal crown.—Examine yourselves, my brethren, on this important point. See what have been the deficiencies during the last twelve months, and by an increase of fervour and diligence, endeavour to make better use of the blessings and inspirations of God, during this present year.

In the second place, my brethren, grace was given to you, during the last year, to resist the temptations, suggested to your minds by the Devil, the World, and the Flesh, and it was the will of your Lord and Master that you should correspond with those graces. It was his will that you should resist every temptation. It was his will that you should crucify the flesh

with its vices and concupiscences. It was his will that you should renounce the old man, and put on the new ; that you should purge out the old leaven, and become a new paste, feasting on the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Cor. v.) It was his will that you should have done what was necessary to make your calling and election sure. — In what manner have you complied with the will of God in these respects? Have you diminished the treasure of wrath, which you had accumulated by your sins, during the preceding years of your life? or have you added to it? Have you overcome any of your passions? Have you renounced any of your vicious habits? Have you weakened any of the ties, which bound you down to the false pleasures, and deceitful enjoyments of this miserable world? Are you, in a word, less enslaved to the devil, and to your inordinate inclinations ~~and tempers~~, than you were this time last year? — Ah! my brethren, if the accumulation of the treasure of wrath be not greatly diminished during the last year, what are you to expect for the future? You have no reason to look for greater graces this year than you received during the last. You have no reason to suppose that your temptations will be less violent or less numerous, nor that you will experience fewer obstacles, or less difficulties in taking up your cross, than ~~what~~ you experienced last year. And if you do not take the resolution, once for all, to begin a new course of life, and to make

satisfaction for the past, what will be the consequences? If this year is to be spent as the preceding years have been, what will be the end at last? Will not every year, until the last year arrives, be the same? And, if this is to be the case, by what means is the accumulated treasure of wrath to be done away? When is it that you are to bring forth fruits worthy of penance? How is it that you are to prove yourselves deserving of an eternal reward? How is it that you are to show forth, that you lived in Christ, and that Christ lived in you?

—Oh! my brethren, if you value the salvation of your souls, time is not to be let slip in this manner. Year after year, and nothing done, is not the way to lay up treasures in heaven. You have, probably, great debts to the divine Justice standing against you. These must be cancelled, before any thing like a balance can be found in your favour. If then, you continue on, year after year, adding to your debts, instead of liquidating them by sincere penance, and turning from the evil of your ways, how is it that you are to manage to pay your whole debt, and to accumulate a sufficient treasure for eternity, when the great accounting day is at hand?—When you see a young man spending the most valuable, and active part of his life, in one continued round of idle amusements, and wasteful extravagance, knowing that his capital is gone, and that his debts are daily encreasing, what are your fore-

hodings concerning his future lot? Does the idea ever enter your mind, allowing that his creditors will have patience with him, that, when the time is arrived when infirmities will not allow him to work, and payment is demanded, he will then be enabled, by unforeseen circumstances, to collect in a moment, sufficient to discharge all his debts, and to have a sufficiency remaining for his future support? Such an idea would be the farthest from your thoughts. —Apply this case to yourselves in a spiritual point of view, and take advantage of the time of health and strength, to discharge the debts, which you owe to the divine Justice, by renouncing your evil deeds, and by bringing forth fruits worthy of penance.

In the third place, look back, my brethren, and calculate the progress in virtue, which you have made, during this last year. You have received many graces from God, not only to avoid evil, but to do good. God has entrusted talents to you; and it has been his will, not only that you should keep these talents whole, but that you should have put them to profit, and gained other talents. Probably, there were many virtues, which he intended that you should have acquired during this last year, many good works which you ought to have performed. Sufficient grace was given to you to produce these effects. And if these effects have not been produced, may it not be said that the fault is your own? and that you have

abused, and squandered away these invaluable gifts?

But, whether or not it was intended that you should acquire any new virtue, at least grace was given to you to advance in those virtues, which you already possessed. Grace was given to you to become more humble, more meek, more chaste, more temperate, more mortified, more fervent, and more attentive to religious duties. Grace was given to you to advance in the love of God, and in the love of your neighbour. Graces were certainly given to you for these purposes; and if you have not put them to profit, you have not been good servants to the extent required. And if you do not repair the deficiency by redoubled diligence for the future, will you not be found wanting, when you are summoned to give in your accounts?

Oh! my brethren, ponder at leisure on these important subjects. I have not called your attention to the individual thoughts, words, actions, or omissions, which have filled up the space of your time, during the last year; I have referred only to a general review of your conduct. And yet, what subject is there for alarm! What powerful reasons are there to apprehend that all would not be well with you, were your salvation to depend on the performances of this last year! How truly may it be said, that you have not lived as you would wish to die!—For my own part, the terrible account, which I shall have to give, fills me with dismay. I

know not one half of my transgressions, nor the enormity of them. Neither do I know one half of the responsibility I have incurred by the graces which I have received, and have neglected. All that I know is, that the great Judge will judge justice itself: and how shall I be able to stand! My God, have mercy on me, when thou comest at the last day.

My brethren, let it be your determination to set your house in order without delay. Live henceforward, as you will wish to have lived, when your last hour is come. The mercies of the Lord have spared you, during this last year, whilst thousands of others have been cut off, and many of them in their sins. He has brought you to the beginning of this new year. He is willing to manure the vineyard of your souls once more, with his holy word, his sacraments, and his graces; hoping that, now at least, you will begin to bring forth fruit in due season.— Refuse no longer, to correspond with his holy will. Cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light. This, perhaps, is the last time that he will favour you with his mercies. Your lives, in all probability, will be much shorter than you are willing to imagine. Look round and see, which of your relatives and acquaintance have been taken off by death during the last twelve months. Did any of them calculate that their time was to be so short, when the last year commenced? Did they not all look forward to length of days, with as

much reason, as you now do yourselves? Nevertheless, the thread of their mortality has been cut, and they are now corrupting in their graves. ~~Before this day twelvemonth, if God~~ preserve my health, I shall be called to the death-bed of many of you, who are now assembled to hear my words. I shall have to administer to you the last consoling rites of our holy religion, to hear your last sigh, and to see you give up the ghost. Oh! if I could, as I ~~remarked in the beginning of this discourse,~~ point out by name every individual, whom I shall have to attend in this manner, what impression would it make, not only on the minds of the devoted victims, but on the minds of every one of you! And ought it to make less impression because the names of the victims are concealed? You all know that the sentence of death will be executed upon several here present, before the conclusion of this year; and not one of you can say that he will not be of the number. And can you go on unconcernedly, as if all was secure? You know not but that your bodies will be reduced to a mass of corruption, and the irrevocable sentence for eternity be passed upon you before the conclusion of the year, and can you still be in love with vanity, and court iniquity?

Oh! what is this world, my brethren! what are its pleasures, its riches, its follies, if they are so soon to be parted with, and to be so dearly paid for! How senseless must be the

men, who set their hearts upon them, and, for their sake, expose themselves to the danger of losing their God, and their all, for an eternity!

My brethren, let us be more wise. Let us begin in good earnest to love God with our whole hearts. ~~Let us despise all that passes with time,~~ and adhere to God alone, who is eternal. Let us *deny ungodliness, and worldly desires*, and live henceforward, *soberly, and justly, and piously*. ~~Let us endeavour to be always prepared for our departure hence.~~ Let us wait for the coming of the Lord, with our loins girt, and with lamps burning in our hands.—Then, we shall be ready to open to him, immediately, when he cometh and knocketh: and he, in return, will cause us to sit down at his table, and passing will minister to us of all the good things, which he has prepared for his faithful servants in a happy eternity.

EPIPHANY.



*Behold there came wise men from the East, saying: Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the East, and have come to adore him.....*MATT. ii. 2.

OF all the benefits, which the munificent hand of our Creator has imparted to us, the first in rank is the manifestation of his divinity, or the knowledge of himself. Creation itself is not to be compared with it. For, what benefit would it have been to enjoy existence, and not enjoy the means of preparing our souls for heaven?—Until the time of the incarnation of our Lord and Saviour, this supereminent gift was imparted to one only nation—the Jews. All other nations were sitting in darkness, and in the shades of death. Blindness and reprobation were entailed from one generation to another, from one age to another, with a multiplied encrease of misery, folly, and superstition.

At length, the time of mercy came; the moment arrived, when this benefit was to be

imparted to all the nations of the universe. *The Prince of peace, the Desired of all nations* came down from heaven, and was born in Bethlehem of Juda. A bright luminary was fixed in the heavens to convey the happy tidings to the nations afar off, and to draw to the crib the first fruits of the Gentiles. The signal, probably, was not understood by the multitude. Of those, who did understand its meaning, three only were found who had courage and faith sufficient to induce them to leave their country, and friends, and to go in search of him, in whom the Gentiles were to hope, and who was to be their salvation and deliverance. It was on this day, that these three, who are generally called *Kings*, or *Wise Men*, arrived at Bethlehem to pay their homage, and present their gifts to the Messiah.

The Church, always solicitous that her children should express their gratitude to God for every blessing, has set apart this day to be employed in thanksgiving for this gracious manifestation of the light of faith to the Gentiles; and she invites us to join with the Wisemen, and to present ourselves in spirit before the crib of Bethlehem, for the purpose of paying our homage to our new-born King, and offering our gifts.—This may properly be called the *Christmas day of the Gentiles*. It has always been celebrated by the Church of God with the greatest solemnity, and has always been considered as one of the principal festi-

vals of the year.—A few remarks on the example of the Wise Men, as recorded in the gospel, will afford an instructive lesson, and teach you how to sanctify this great day in a manner worthy of christians.

The Wise Men were inhabitants of some country to the east of Judea, probably of Arabia. They were distinguished amongst their countrymen for wisdom and learning. From the tradition of their forefathers, probably derived from the prophecy of Balaam, they seem to have learned that a great king was to be born, and that the birth of this great king was to be signalized by the appearance of an extraordinary star. With respect to their religious opinions, they probably were buried in the superstition and idolatry of their native country. They, perhaps, had never acknowledged, nor ever adored any other deity than the sun, moon, stars, or other inferior creatures.—Nevertheless, although labouring under these disadvantages, no sooner did the extraordinary star appear, but they arose without delay. They wished for knowledge, and they sought after it. They loved the truth, and they found it. The prospect neither of difficulties or dangers made any impression on them. They arose, regardless alike of the censures of the unwise, and of the uncertainty of success, and proceeded in quest of the new-born king, in hopes of being able to pay their homage to him.

Here, my brethren, is an example, which

loudly condemns the tepidity of the slothful christian. You are not labouring under the disadvantages as were the Wise Men. You were never buried in the shades of idolatry. The names of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, have been familiar to you from your infancy. You do not follow the faint glimmerings of a star: the Sun of Justice itself has always shone upon you in meridian splendor.—The advantages, which you enjoy, are greater than were enjoyed either by Jew or Gentile. You are fully acquainted with the mysteries of your redemption. You are encouraged to correspond with the gracious calls of heaven, by the examples of infinite numbers of holy martyrs and confessors in all ages, in all states and conditions. The voice of the church and her ministers continually exhorts you to forsake the husks of swine, and to seek after the embraces of your divine Jesus. They clearly point out to you the road, which leads to the throne of this great King. They declare to you that punishments without end and without measure, are reserved in store for those, who will not follow the light of heaven: and that rewards, far beyond all that is possible for the heart of man to conceive, are prepared for those, who live justly and piously, and persevere to the end.—In addition to these external encouragements, you are interiorly invited to a holy life by the secret inspirations of God in your souls, and you are deterred from vice by the stings of conscience, and by the

horrors of remorse. These, my brethren, are advantages, to which the Wise Men were strangers. And in what manner do you correspond with them? St. Maximus, a holy bishop, formerly reproached the Jews in these words: "A prophet speaks to the Jews, and he is not heard: to the Wise Men a silent star appears, and it convinces. Literally are the words of Isaiah (lii. 15.) accomplished: *they to whom it was not told of him have seen, and they that have not heard have believed.* Chaldea exulted at the birth of Christ: Jerusalem is troubled." But, my brethren, if we look into the christian world, with how much greater reason may these reproaches be made to those, who profess to be followers of the light! Christ himself speaks to christians: all ages, all nations, all states, all every thing, speak to christians, and they are not heard. The spirit of true piety is almost unknown. The way of the cross is almost forsaken.—Oh! my brethren, be more attentive to the calls of heaven. Arise without delay. Follow the light which is placed before you. Hasten to the crib of your infant Saviour; and there pour forth your souls before him in acts of unfeigned sorrow for your past disloyalties, and in protestations of fidelity for the time to come.

But to return to the Wise Men. They left their native country: they left their family and kindred: they undertook a long and painful journey, not knowing when, or where it would

end. They were not disheartened when they found that Herod and his court were ignorant of the Saviour's birth. They persevered in their search. Their courage was rewarded; the heavenly messenger again appeared to them, and conducted them to the crib of Jesus.

Here, my brethren, is another plentiful source of instruction. What is your courage and perseverance? Are you resolved to seek the truth, whatever it may cost? Are you determined to conquer every difficulty, and to make every sacrifice in order to prove yourselves faithful followers of the great Messiah?—Alas! how often do we hear the worldly minded, and the pusillanimous exclaim: “How can I deprive myself of my accustomed pleasures and amusements? How can I force myself to feel a relish for prayer and other spiritual duties, and prefer them to the joys which surround me? How can I take up my cross, and court self-denials? How is it possible that I should fulfil all the duties, which the gospel enjoins? These things are above my strength.”—How often, my brethren, do we hear language similar to this! But, how loudly is such pusillanimity condemned by the conduct of the Wise Men! How contrary is it to the spirit, which ought to animate the soul of every christian! Did they but seriously consider the state in which they are: were they but feelingly convinced that they were here in a state of bondage, in a foreign land, at an immense distance

from their true country, the land of promise, how eager would they be to obtain a reversion of their sentence, and to return from exile? And were they to be informed that that sentence was reversed, and that they were at liberty to return to their native land, how courageously would they encounter every danger, and surmount every difficulty!—What are the feelings, what is the conduct of the worldling, whose crimes against the state have caused him to be confined, for an indefinite length of time, in a dungeon, secluded entirely from his family and friends? He spends his days in mourning and sorrow. He sighs only for his deliverance. When the happy tidings are announced to him that his captivity is at an end, his sorrows disappear: his grief is changed into gladness, and his sighs into exultations. His recent sufferings are forgotten, and his soul overflows with joy at the near prospect of being restored to every thing that was dear and valuable to him in life.—Ah! my brethren, were you as solicitous to return to your true country, as the worldling to the bosom of his family, your joy would not be less than his, nor would your labours be less agreeable. You would not complain of little inconveniences, self-denials, or the like. You would not suffer trifling enjoyments, or the depraved inclinations of corrupt nature to occupy your attention. You would not say: “Why should I refuse myself

the amusements, which my means allow me to enjoy?" Your only enquiry would be, whether such or such an act of self-denial, whether the compliance with such or such a duty, would contribute to forward you towards heaven.—— Oh! where is your faith? where is your love either of God, or of your own souls? Had the Wise Men listened to the voice of slothful nature, and suffered difficulties to retard their journey, they would probably have been left in the darkness of idolatry, and have perished eternally. If you are retained by difficulties or dangers, you, notwithstanding your boasted light of christianity, will be deserted by God, and permitted to sink into that dreadful precipice, where no order but universal horror dwelleth.

The Wise Men, having at length overcome every difficulty, arrived at Bethlehem. Here, my brethren, examine their conduct, and imitate their example.—*They entered the house where the child was, and falling down they adored him: and opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh.* Oh! with what devotion did they offer their hearts to their infant Saviour! With what love did they fix their eyes on him! With what profound respect did they adore him! Examine their behaviour, I say, examine the nature of their gifts, and see whether, under like circumstances, you act in like manner. You frequently

enter the house, where your Saviour resides by his particular presence. You frequently fall down on your knees before him. You frequently profess to offer him gifts. But in what manner is it that you present yourselves before him? and what is the real value of the gifts which you offer? Were we to judge from the manner, and from the general conduct of great numbers amongst you, we should not be warranted in forming a very favourable opinion. Many there are who seem to dislike the house of God. Instead of *rejoicing with exceeding great joy*, they seem to grieve, they delay entering into his house till the very last moment: they come as late as they can, and depart as soon as they can. The house of God has no attractions for them: and we might almost say, that, were it not for a positive command, under pain of punishment hereafter, they would seldom or never pass the threshold. Such declarations are painful to be made. But, to judge from appearances, such declarations may be made, and certainly would be made by those of the zealous sectarists, who, with perfect readiness and joy, attend their place of worship, three or four times on a Sunday, and each time are there before the service begins. Oh! that all the followers of the true faith were as scrupulously exact. I fear that the disciples of Wesley and Calvin will one day rise up in judgment against them.

After you have entered the house of God, in what manner is it that you adore your Lord and Saviour? I hope that little fault is to be found with your exterior conduct. You seem to offer up your prayers with devotion. You listen to his holy word with attention. You seem to adore him with sincerity and awe. But what is the nature of the gifts which you offer him? Are they of intrinsic value? or, are they only counterfeit? In respect to these, you must each of you judge for himself. The Wise Men offered to him gold, frankincense, and myrrh: and these gifts are descriptive of the gifts which you yourselves are expected to offer to him. By frankincense is denoted prayer; by myrrh the spirit of mortification, and by gold the spirit of charity as it relates both to God and your neighbour.—First, as to your prayers. Do your prayers consist in fervent evaporations of your souls to God? or, are they only the dull perusal of the prayers in your books, repeated without attention, without fervour, without care, without thought, without understanding? Are you struck with reverential awe in the presence of the Deity? are you annihilated, as it were, in the sight of the Lamb of God, and of all his heavenly host? Or, are you cold and indifferent as to his presence? Judge for yourselves in this point: and then you may determine the value of your first offering.—The myrrh of mortification and self-denial is the second gift:

and this is an offering, which you must have prepared beforehand. What acts, therefore, of this kind have you to offer, when you present yourselves before him? Have you been guided in general by the spirit of penance, or by the spirit of self-love? Have you denied yourselves in any of the inclinations, which you were disposed to follow? Have you endured, with patience and resignation, the involuntary mortifications and afflictions, which your tender Father has sent you for your greater good? Have you any thing to offer him, worthy of his acceptance, in either of these respects? These are offerings, my brethren, which are most acceptable to your Saviour, because they are offerings, which consist in the sacrifice of your own will, and cause you to resemble him, who had no other will than the will of his Father, and who became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.—The third offering is *gold*, or charity as regards both God and your neighbour. As to the first, you probably think that you love God. But it is easy for a person to deceive himself in this particular. You do not love God, at least, you do not love him as you ought, if you do not love him in preference to every thing else. You do not love him, if you continue to offend him, or if you do not labour with earnestness to avoid sin. You do not love him, if you do not endeavour to make yourselves more and more acceptable to him by

advancing daily in virtue, or if you do not prefer the enjoyments of his kingdom before the transitory pleasures of the earth. Examine, therefore, the nature of your love of God; and if you perceive that it is faulty in any of these points, depend upon it that your gold is not sterling in his sight, and that it is not an offering which will be acceptable in his sight.—As to the love of your neighbour, what offering have you to make of this kind? Oh! of all the virtues enjoined by the gospel, there is probably not one which is practised without blame so seldom as this. I have frequently described to you the qualities, and the extent of this virtue, and I shall leave you to judge whether your offering is such as to authorize you to suppose that it will be acceptable in the sight of God.

Look, therefore, seriously into the state of your souls. If you perceive that you have not hitherto walked in the footsteps of the Wise Men, begin now at least. Your Judge has allowed you to begin a new year. Spend it better than you have done the last. Your God is now to you a God of mercy and love. But he will not be so always. Hereafter, he will be a God of justice, strong and mighty. Despise not his mercy now, if you wish to avoid his anger when time shall be no more. Shut not your ears to his calls now, if you wish not to be rebuked in his indignation, and chastised in his wrath. Begin in earnest. His friendship, and his

graces will encrease in proportion to your advancement in virtue: and if nothing has been wanting on your part to sanctify your souls, at that awful day, when you shall be summoned to appear before him in his kingdom, he will not put on the terrors of his judgments, but he will appear before you clothed in the robes of gladness, and will welcome you to his embraces for ever.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

ON THE OBLIGATION, AND MANNER OF OBSERVING THE HOLIDAYS OF THE CHURCH.

When Jesus was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast..... LUKE ii. 42.

FROM the words of my text, my brethren, it appears that the parents of our blessed Lord went up every year to Jerusalem to celebrate the solemn festivals of the law. It appears, likewise, that their pious attention to this observance did not distinguish them from the rest of the people: *it was the custom of the feast*; and they were accompanied by a great crowd of kindred and acquaintance.

The festivals of the old law were many in number, and it was the general custom of the Jews to go to Jerusalem, and solemnize them in the temple by sacrifices and prayer. Some of these festivals were instituted by the express orders of God himself: and others were appointed by the authority of the high-priest and

council. These festival days are no longer in force. They were abolished at the time that the old law was abrogated. A new order of things has taken place. New mysteries have been manifested to us : new events have taken place ; and new festivals have been appointed, to commemorate the great and glorious things which have been wrought for our redemption. The obligation of observing these festivals of the new law, is as binding on Christians, as that of observing the festivals of the old law was binding on the Jews. Both the one and the other proceed from the same authority, namely, either immediately from the command of God, or from the injunction of those, whom God has placed over his people, and of whom he says : *he that heareth you, heareth me ; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me.* (Luke x.)

—A few reflections on this subject will not be unworthy of your attention, particularly at this time, when the commemoration of so many mysteries has occupied your pious thoughts during the late festivals.

The principal festivals of the Catholic Religion are of the highest antiquity in the Church. They were observed by the Apostles, or by the immediate successors of the Apostles. In the beginning, probably, there was no positive injunction issued by the Apostles, or their successors, to enforce the obligation of observing them. There was no need of such a command. The faithful were then animated with one heart

and one mind. Their piety was enlightened, and their love of God fervent and encreasing. Their principal delight was to recall to mind the words of their dear Lord, to dwell with raptures on the wonders of his love, and to commemorate annually the chief mysteries of their redemption, on the days on which they were wrought.—[In the same manner, but with more exalted motives, as the fond mother commemorates the birth, or other memorable occurrences in the life of a darling child, the primitive Christians commemorated the principal events of their Saviour's life. And their commemoration of them consisted, not merely in noting the day, but in devoting the day to the pious exercises of religion, attending the holy sacrifice, partaking of the bread of life in the blessed sacrament, and pouring forth their souls in acts of thanksgiving and love, in the general assembly of the faithful. The general custom at length became law: and, in process of time, in order to prevent the decay of morals from weakening this law, a positive command was issued by the Church, to enforce the observance of it, under the penalty of sin. Thus has the obligation of observing the festivals been handed down to us, who live in these latter times. There are some festivals, indeed, of a later date: but similar motives, which gave rise to the first, gave rise to these also: and the same authority enjoins us to pay attention to them.

From the beginning, therefore, of the Christian Church, festivals have been observed : and from the time that the general custom had passed into a law, the obligation of observing them had been binding under sin.

Rut how are they to be observed ? With the same solemnity, with the same exercises of piety, and the same rest from labour, as the Sundays. The Church makes no distinction between them : and in catholic countries, no distinction is made by the faithful, except that the festivals are observed by them, as Christmas day is observed here, with greater solemnity, and more general frequentation of the sacraments, than the Sundays are.

It is the duty of the Catholics of this country, to do the same, and to see that all under their charge, as far as circumstances will allow, have liberty in that respect. The law is the law, and the obligation of observing it cannot be dispensed with in favour of any individual by any other authority than by that which passed the law, and commanded its observance.

There are many in these latter times,—times, when, as the Apostle foretold, (2 Tim. iv.) religious innovations and laxity of morals were to be at their utmost point, who say that the observance of festival days is superfluous, or even superstitious, or at best, that it is injurious to the common concerns of mankind ; knowing, at the same time, that more days are spent in luxury and drunkenness by these very men,

than the church requires to be devoted to works of piety.

Nothing, my brethren, is superfluous or superstitious, which tends to encrease the growth of genuine piety in our hearts, or which is an act of gratitude to God for benefits received. The observance of the festivals tends to both these objects. It tends to encrease the growth of piety, and to call forth our gratitude, by fixing our particular attention, at stated times, on the most extraordinary events of our Saviour's life, and on the wonders of his love. For, where is the Christian,—the Christian, I mean, who by sincere piety is entitled to that venerable name,—where is the Christian, who can fix his thoughts on any of the mysteries, which his Saviour has wrought for his redemption, and not feel the sensations of gratitude and love arising in his breast? Where is the Christian, who, on these solemn days, can enter into the assembly of the faithful, and behold multitudes of his fellow-creatures prostrate before the altar, and uniting in the great sacrifice of propitiation, which is offered up in thanksgiving for the signal blessings purchased for us by an incarnate Jesus, and not feel a glow of divine love in the interior of his soul? No : my brethren, such recollections, such scenes must have their effect. None but the hardened, and the obdurately impenitent, can resist them.—These observances, therefore, are not superfluous. Only let the benefits, which the pious

Christian receives from them, be duly weighed, and it will be acknowledged, that the festivals form an important part of the exercises of devotion. The true disciple of Jesus enters into the views of the church in the celebration of every solemnity. He is well convinced, that it is his duty to endeavour daily to love his God more and more, and to serve him with greater and greater fidelity. He is aware that, to entertain the idea, that he has arrived to as great a state of perfection as God wills him to do, is a certain sign that he is deficient either in the knowledge, or in the performance of his essential duties. He knows this ; and in consequence of this knowledge, he is eager to seize every occasion to animate himself to greater exertions, and to advance with more rapid strides towards the mark that is set before him. Every solemn festival he spends in serious meditation on the subject of it. At the annual commemoration of the birth of Christ, his mind is absorbed in the consideration of the wonderful love of God for man, which induced him to humble himself so low, as to appear amongst us in the form of an helpless infant. He considers his poverty : he considers his sufferings : he considers his abandonment in that tender state, and excites himself to submissive patience, to humility, and to acts of thanksgiving and love, by the contemplation of the heavenly Model, which is placed before him.—On the festival of the *Circumcision*, he seems to behold

the sufferings of his infant Jesus,—his body bathed in blood,—his tears trickling down his tender cheeks ; and his heart melts at the sight.—On the *Epiphany*, he is reminded of the infinite mercies of his Lord, who, on that day, manifested himself to the nations of the earth, and gave them, as it were, a solemn pledge that the merits, which he was about to purchase with his blood, should be imparted to all tribes, and nations, and peoples, and tongues, even to the uttermost bounds of the earth.—At the solemn *Commemoration of his Passion and Death* on the cross, he beholds the completion of the great mystery of love,—the redemption of man, and his heart is agitated by two opposite feelings,—of confusion for his past disloyalties and ingratitude, which have cost so great a price,—and of the sweetest love for a God, who did not hesitate to submit, in his human nature, to the most excruciating death, in order to save him from the wrath to come.—On the festival of the *Resurrection*, he beholds with joy his Lord triumphant over death ; he beholds the gates of heaven thrown open to receive him ; and he beholds every obstacle to his salvation removed, except those which depend on his own exertions.—On the festival of the *Ascension*, he beholds his Saviour leading captivity captive, and ascending to take possession of those mansions of eternal bliss, which his blood had purchased, and to prepare a place for him in the bosom of his Father.—On the festival of

Pentecost, he meditates on the invaluable, and ineffable blessings, which the Spirit of God has poured forth on the human race, and which he is ready to pour forth on him individually.—On the festival of *Corpus Christi*, his soul is enraptured with love at the contemplation of that inexpressible mystery of love, that invaluable treasure, the body and blood of his Lord, which is bequeathed to him in the holy Sacrament of the Altar.—At the solemn festivals of the *Saints*, he beholds models of christian perfection placed before his eyes; and he feels within himself an encreased ardour to walk in their footsteps, in hopes of partaking of their rewards.

In meditations of this nature is the mind of the pious Christian employed on the annual commemoration of these mysteries of our religion. And will any one say that they are not calculated to make serious impressions, and produce the most beneficial effects?—Whether or not these effects are actually produced in the minds of all Christians, by means of the festivals, is foreign to our question. There are too many, I readily acknowledge, who seldom reflect seriously on the mysteries of their redemption: and there are too many, I again acknowledge, who can and do reflect on them, and yet, although they are convinced that they were wrought by an incarnate God out of love for them, can reflect on them without feeling the least warmth of divine love arising in their

breasts, or offering the least violence to themselves, to prove that they are not ungrateful for such infinite blessings.—But, although there are many, whose hearts are callous in this manner, the means are calculated to produce the effects above described, when the heart is animated with the love of God, and the Christian is sincerely desirous of working out his salvation.

The zealots of these times, who, as was foretold by the Royal Prophet, (Ps. lxxiii.) have laboured to *abolish all the festival days of the Lord from the earth*, piously pretend that the soul ought to be employed daily in meditation, and in acts of thanksgiving for the great mysteries of redemption, and that particular days, set apart for particular mysteries, is contrary to the spirit of a Christian. That these mysteries ought daily to occupy our attention, is very certain. But there are too many subjects for the employment of our pious thoughts in order to give them all due consideration. They must be divided. There must be a time for one, and a time for another. And this is arranged by the succession of the different festivals throughout the year.

There are others, whom I will not call pious zealots, but men zealously attached to the things of the world, who say that the observance of festivals breaks in upon their business, is injurious to their interests, and is a loss of time. Were we made for this world only, or were our advancement in this world the princi-

pal object of our existence, such language as this would be perfectly consistent. But it so happens, that we were made for another, and better world; and that our true interest consists in labouring earnestly for, and refusing no sacrifice that will contribute to ensure to us a happy lot in that other world, towards which we are hastening. As for time, it is given us for the express purpose of preparing ourselves for eternity. The obligation of employing time in *labouring for our daily bread*, is a curse entailed on us by the sin of our first parents. That of employing time for the purchase of an eternal crown, is the most glorious privilege of sinful man. And shall any one seek excuse, for neglecting that which is his glory and his pride, for the purpose of attending to that, which is no other than a curse? Oh! how perversely must the mind of that man be disposed! how inordinately must his affections be fixed on the perishable things of this world!

Perhaps, again, it may be asked, why cannot a Christian save his soul, without attending to these times and circumstances? To the Catholic I reply, that obedience to the laws of the church is a duty of essential importance. To others I say, that gratitude for blessings received, is an essential feature in the character of a good Christian. Now, were we all fully sensible of the blessings, which each of these mysteries has purchased for us, we should with one voice declare, that one day in the year

set apart to be spent in acts of gratitude and love for each of them, was nothing more than what was strictly just, and a duty on the part of man : and that the man, who presumed to refuse to join in the solemn festival, was guilty of a gross violation of the laws of gratitude, and was unworthy of the blessings which have been purchased for him. Yes, my brethren, gratitude enforces the obligation of observing these days : and ingratitude characterizes the disposition of every one who refuses to attend to them.

Be attentive, therefore, my brethren, to this part of your duty. From the slight attendance that there generally is in the house of God on these days, there is reason to believe that many of you are deficient. I am aware that there are numbers, who are obliged to be absent, on account of their engagements with masters, who acknowledge not the obligation of festivals. For these a dispensation may be granted, provided that they engage to sanctify the day, to the best of their power, when they are at work.—But there are many, who have not this reasonable plea, and yet do not attend. Or, if they do condescend to hear mass, pay no more attention to the festival, during the remainder of the day, than if it were no festival at all.* And cases have been known, when catholic masters have not only given full work to men of other religious persuasions, on those days, but have insisted that Catholics, who were in their em-

ploy, should devote the day to labour, scarcely allowing them one hour, for the purpose of hearing mass. Casual circumstances may, perhaps, for once plead a reasonable excuse for such conduct. But, when it degenerates into custom, nothing can excuse it.

Suffer not, therefore, my brethren, every petty interest, every trifling hurry of business, or the examples of those, who belong not to the catholic faith, to keep you from an attentive performance of your duty on festivals. Follow the example of your Saviour, and his holy parents, and walk in their footsteps. Seek the kingdom of God, and his justice, in the first place, and be assured that every thing beside will be given to you. The blessing of God will contribute more to your success, than all the labour which you can perform when your duty forbids it. Let his love be the chief object of your ambition, and let the salvation of your souls be the chief object of your solicitude. By such conduct, you will ensure to yourselves the consolations and the favours of heaven in this life, and you will be preparing yourselves for the plenitude of its delights in the next.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

ON MATRIMONY.

There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee ; and the mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus also was invited, and his disciples, to the marriage. JOHN ii. 1, 2.

IN the gospel of this Sunday, we read that the Messiah honoured a new-married couple with his presence at their wedding feast, and that he testified his approbation of ~~the holy state of~~ matrimony, by working his first miracle on that occasion.

~~The state of~~ matrimony was intended by the Almighty to be the state of the generality of mankind. It was instituted in the very beginning, when God created our first parents, male and female, and gave them a command to encrease and multiply. During the time, indeed, of the old law, permission was given to the Jews, on account of the hardness of their hearts, ~~and the violence of their passions,~~ to take more wives

than one at the same time, and to give a bill of divorce in certain cases; but our Lord was pleased to reduce ~~the state of~~ matrimony to its original perfection, by confining it to one man and one woman, and by declaring the bond to be indissoluble except by death: *for this cause*, said he, *shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they two shall be in one flesh. Wherefore, they are no more two, but one flesh. What God, therefore, hath joined together, let no man put asunder.* (Matt. xix.)

~~I will not, however, detain your attention by~~ arguments tending to prove the lawfulness, or sanctity, or the indissolubility of the state of matrimony. These are subjects which you have been taught from your younger years, and which you have always believed. There are other points, concerning the subject of matrimony, which are more calculated to be of service to you, and to which I will call your attention.

The state of matrimony, therefore, is a lawful, a holy, and indissoluble state; but it is not a state that is necessary for every one: a man may embrace it, or not, according as circumstances ~~may~~ direct ~~him~~. *If thou take a wife*, says St. Paul, *thou hast not sinned: and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. But I say to the unmarried, and to the widows, it is good for them if they continue, even as I.* (1 Cor. vii. 28.) It is good, therefore, to enter into the state of matrimony: and it is good; likewise, or, as

the Apostle says, in the same chapter, it is better if a life of celibacy and continency be preferred, ~~through motives of divine love, and~~ for the purpose of serving God in greater perfection.

No one, indeed, will say that matrimony is obligatory on every one. A man or woman may prefer a single life through motives of convenience even for this world, and no crime attributed to him either in the sight of God or man. If, then, worldly motives may be a sufficient reason for abstaining from matrimony, much more so the motives, which arise from the love of God, and from the desire of attending with fewer distractions to his divine service. These were the motives which induced St. Paul to prefer a life of celibacy : the same may be said of the other Apostles, and of their fellow-labourers and successors in the episcopacy. These were the motives which induced the church in all ages to impose the law of celibacy on all her clergy : and these same motives have induced innumerable multitudes of both sexes, in all ages, to seclude themselves from the world, and in continency and chastity to make their calling and election sure.

Matrimony, therefore, is not a state which every one individually is obliged to embrace. Chastity is a virtue which all are commanded to practise with the strictest nicety ; but matrimony may, or may not be contracted, as circumstances may direct. But on this subject I

will not enlarge. As matrimony is the state which has been, or will be embraced by the greater number of you, I will call your attention exclusively to that subject, and point out the rules which ought to be observed in preparing for it.

Matrimony is a holy state ; and the entering into that state may truly be called one of the most important actions in life. In fact, happiness in this world, and ~~preparing~~ for happiness in the next, in great measure depend upon it. Young people, therefore, cannot be too careful. — It is a holy state, and it requires ~~purity and~~ holiness of disposition in those who embrace it. If it be embraced without this disposition, its sanctity is defiled, and the title to the blessings which God has annexed to the sacramental contract, is forfeited. It was instituted by God for the ~~nuptial~~ purposes, — namely, that the race of rational beings might be continued to the end of time, the object of whose existence would be to proclaim the glories of the Lord in this world, and enjoy his presence in the next. It was instituted for the purpose of enabling the parties to restrain the violence of carnal concupiscence, and that man might have a help-mate and a comforter, by whose endearments and blandishments the dreary paths of life might be rendered pleasing and cheerful. In a word, it was instituted for the purpose that, man and woman ~~being~~ united together in one heart and one

soul, ~~they~~ might encourage each other, by mutual exhortations and example, to advance daily in the ways of virtue and goodness, and by their united labours implant the seeds of piety, and cherish their growth in the breasts of ~~those~~ *these* who are committed to their charge. — These

were the motives which caused the Almighty to institute this holy state ; and it is the indispensable duty of every one, both male and female, to be animated with the pure desire of fulfilling the will of God in these respects.

This being the truth, what are we to think of those young people, who rush blindly forward, without any regard to the will of God, or to the holy ends of matrimony, and have no other object in view, in choosing their partners, than temporal emolument, and worldly advantages ! What are we to think of those who are influenced solely by violence of attachment, or whose motive is the gratification of sensuality !

What are we to think of those who, having arrived at maturer years, and lost the first partner of their affections, are as eager, and as sensual, and as little attentive to the will of God in the choice of a second, as is a young person of twenty ! May we not say with justice, and will not experience prove the truth of our words, that such persons act contrary to their own interest, as well as to duty, and that they are probably preparing for themselves miseries and afflictions, the extent and duration of which it is impossi-

ble to ascertain? I do not wish it to be understood, that a man is not to seek a wife with a competent fortune, or that he is not to listen to the dictates of affection. But these are not to be his only motives. He is a Christian, and destined to immortality, and therefore something more noble than these worldly considerations ought to influence his conduct in a concern on which so much depends.

Make this point, therefore, my brethren, the subject of your serious meditation. It is not to be treated with levity. It ought, above all other temporal things, to engage your attention. Every thing depends upon the deliberation and motives, with which you enter into it. The unhappy marriages, which we so frequently witness, are undoubted proofs that the risk of not choosing a person in every respect proper for you, is great; and that, if you fail, your happiness in this world is exposed to the greatest danger. And it clearly appears, from what I have said above, that if you fail through neglect of attending to the proper motives, you will experience the greatest difficulties in preparing yourselves for happiness in the next.

Important, therefore, as this business is, it is the duty of every rational being to prepare himself for it in the manner which is best calculated to ensure to him its best and most desirable blessings. Reason, and nature itself, dictate to you the propriety of being friends to

yourselves. Were you to be guided merely by love for another, you would be acting in opposition to these dictates, and the consequences would quickly be experienced. Fond love is a transitory feeling, and is too frequently weakened and destroyed by time. But the happiness which nature induces us to seek after, is a substantial blessing,—the summit of all blessings, and the crown of all labours.

How is it, therefore, that young people are to prepare themselves for matrimony, in order to partake of the blessings attached to it? By being disposed, and resolved to prefer the will of God before worldly or sensual inclinations. It is an old proverb, that *happy marriages are made in heaven*. This saying has descended to us from times, when piety was more prevalent in the christian world than it is now. It was made when Christians were attentive to seek in all things the will of God, and acted religiously on the principle, that a supreme Providence orders and arranges every thing that is to contribute to the eternal welfare of his creatures. It was made when Christians were convinced that God not only distributes his special gifts as he wills, and calls one to one state, and another to another; but that, in a married state, he has made woman for man; and that, if he be religiously and fervently applied to by prayer, he will bring those together, who are formed to make each other happy, and to go

hand in hand to heaven. Then it was that the proverb was made, and these were the motives which gave rise to it. Store it in your memory, therefore, my young friends, for it is founded in truth. If it be the will of God that you enter into the married state, depend upon it that God has provided for you. And if you apply to him with ~~all the~~ earnestness ~~of your soul~~, and are disposed to prefer his will before all other considerations, he will lead you by the hand, as it were, to the partner whom he has appointed to share with you the choicest blessings of heaven. Love alone is a blind guide, and under its direction alone it will be more than probable that you will miss the path. But, under the guidance of the Almighty, you are sure not to go astray.

Apply, therefore, to the throne of mercy with all earnestness. Apply to your great Protector, your only sure guide. Let the object of your petitions be, ~~not absolutely that he would provide you with a partner for life, but in the first place, that he would make known to you whether it be his will that you enter into that state, and secondly, when he has manifested his will to that effect, that he would direct you at the time he thinks fit, to the person whom he has chosen for you.~~—I do not say that it is recommendable to cherish a spirit of apathy or indifference as to the person:—the fond attractions of love may and ought to be attended

to, and no danger whatever will arise from them, provided ~~that~~ submission to the will of God is superior to every other consideration.

g. 2. 3. Having applied to the throne of mercy with all earnestness, and ~~his~~ will being manifested to you, either by the voice of your director, or by the interior feelings of your own mind, your next step is the choice of the person. But here again it is necessary that you scrutinize carefully the recesses of your souls, and ascertain the precise motive that induces you to feel a preference for one before another. ~~Weakness~~ is the mind of frail man, ~~particularly in relation to~~ ~~this delicate kind, he~~ is liable to be imposed upon by every fancy, and to imagine that he should find happiness in an union with such or such a person, when in reality, his feelings are excited by nothing more than a base, ignoble passion. This is ~~very frequently~~ the case, when ~~ever~~ beauty is the only cause of attraction. For, what is beauty of features, or symmetry of shape, when they are not accompanied with the amiable qualities, which ennoble the mind? What other impression can such a figure make on the mind of an admirer, except that of carnal concupiscence? Be on your guard, therefore, and seek not a woman merely on account of her beauty. Scrutinize your hearts: and ~~whenever~~ you perceive that sensual enjoyment is the leading motive of your predilection, be assured that that is not the person with whom

if

you are to be happy. ~~Do not impose on your-
selves by vain promises.~~ Let not the violence of passion overcome the powers of reason. For, depend upon it, if ~~impurity~~ be your principal motive, your love is not holy. And, if it be ~~neither pure, nor~~ holy, it most certainly is not according to God, nor will it be sanctified by his blessing. Such a match, consequently, will not have been made in heaven; neither can it be expected to bring with it happiness in this world, or lead to happiness in the next.

Let not your heart therefore be entangled in the nets of sensual love. Seek after one whose good dispositions are similar to your own. Seek after one whose amiable manners are calculated to cheer you in the midst of troubles, and to disperse the clouds of sorrow. Seek after one, whose piety and example are likely to be an encouragement to you to advance in the ways of virtue, and to assist you in the performance of those great duties, both spiritual and temporal, which you owe to your children. Fire will not endure to mix with water, nor will the smoothness of oil coagulate with the acidity of vinegar. So neither will man and woman of opposite dispositions unite together in one mind, according to the intentions of matrimony. Be diligent, therefore, and cautious in your search. Rely not upon the mere words, or declarations of the other party, nor even on his or her tender and affectionate conduct towards you during the

time of courtship : for, during that time, the buds of dissension seldom appear, and seldom is the real character of the person discovered. All is then pleasing and agreeable. All is harmony and peace. The one endeavours to humour the inclinations of the other, to avoid giving offence to the other, to sacrifice his own will rather than oppose the will of the other. At that time they are truly two in one mind. Happy, if the union was to continue the same in matrimony. But unfortunately, it too often happens that, during courtship, they make a point of concealing their imperfections, and of appearing in each others eyes exactly the reverse of what they are in themselves. They are in courtship what they ought to be in matrimony; and in matrimony what they ought to be in courtship. Hence arise the evils, which are so frequently witnessed in the married state.

Be on your guard, therefore, my young brethren. I admonish you for your own happiness. When once the knot is tied, it is tied for life. *What God has joined together, no man can put asunder.* (Matt. xix.) The bond is not to be cancelled but by death. And if it should be that you imposed on each other, ~~during courtship~~ by mutually concealing your real characters, and that, in matrimony, you found that you were not of one mind, what greater evil could you be condemned to? Where would you

seek for happiness? Who could extricate you out of the difficulties, into which you had thrown yourselves?

Be on your guard, therefore, now that you have it in your power. Apply earnestly to the throne of grace for direction. Purify your souls from every thing that is inordinate, or that is not perfectly consistent with the will of God. Place before your eyes the example of young Tobias.

The first suitors of Sarah, whom Tobias afterwards took to wife, were influenced by the spirit of lust, and they were each cut off by death the first night after their marriage: *for, as the angel said, they, who, in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves and from their minds, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and the mule, which have no understanding, over them the devil hath power.* (Tob. vi. 17.) Tobias, on the contrary, sought only the honour and glory of God. He willed only his will. The consent of his parents, indeed, was a consideration: for, as he said, *if the same thing should happen to me, whereas I am the only child of my parents, I should bring down their old age with sorrow to the grave.* (Ibid.) But the will of God was his guide: and when he was assured by the angel, that such was the will of God, he readily consented, ~~and demanded her of her parents.~~—After the celebration of his nuptials, he again testified that the honour and glory of God were the objects nearest to his heart: *Lord thou knowest,*

said he, (and his words ought to be deeply impressed on the minds of all young people on their entering into that state), *Lord thou knowest that not for fleshly lust, do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity, in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever.* (Ibid.)

Oh! look to this model, my young ~~models~~, and regulate your conduct according to it. Let not worldly motives, let not sensual motives have an undue weight with you. Consult not fancy, or caprice, alone; but let the honour and glory of God, and the salvation of your souls influence your choice. God is all-sufficient for you, and you may, with safety, rely on him.

On yourselves you cannot rely, because you cannot see into futurity. Put your trust, therefore, in him; and pray with an humble confidence: If it be his blessed will that you enter into the married state, depend upon it that he has a partner intended for you: and, if you apply to him with perfect submission to his appointments, you may rest assured that he will bring that partner to you in the manner, and at the time that he shall think fit.

For, if not a hair of your head fall to the ground without his concurrence, much less may it be said that such an important point, on which almost every thing connected with your happiness depends, will be neglected by his paternal providence.—If, however, it be his blessed will that you remain in a single state, and he manifest that will by instilling into your minds a ~~pure~~

~~and~~ holy love for that state, be thankful for his mercies; for, be assured, that by so ordaining, he intends to raise you to a state of greater perfection, and to enhance your crown in heaven.—But, to whatever state you are called, seek his honour and glory alone; and then you may confidently expect that he will shower down his blessings on you in this life, and prepare you for blessings everlasting in the next.

A happy

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

ON THE DUTIES OF MASTERS AND SERVANTS.

*There came to him a Centurion, beseeching him, and saying:
 Lord, my servant lieth at home, sick of the palsy, and is
 grievously tormented. MATT. viii.*

ON Sunday last, I called your attention to a subject, intimately connected with the happiness, which, as rational beings, ought to excite your deepest interest. On this day a different subject presents itself to us : and, although happiness to the individual in this world does not so intimately depend on the fulfilment of the duties prescribed by it, as on the subject of the preceding Sunday, still much depends on your proper attention to it, both as to happiness here, and happiness hereafter. In the words of my text, we read that a Centurion, an officer in the army, whose rank was equal to that of a lieutenant or captain in these times, interested himself so far in favour of a servant as to undertake a long journey in

order to obtain his cure from him, whose miraculous powers had but a short time before been manifested. He had therefore a great regard for his servant, ~~He~~ treated him with becoming attention. And, when reduced to the bed of sickness, ~~he~~ adopted the means, which appeared to him the most effectual, to obtain his cure. Hence we may collect that there are duties which masters owe to servants, and which cannot either in justice or humanity be neglected. I will call your attention to this subject, and describe as briefly as possible the duties which masters owe to servants, and likewise the reciprocal duties which servants owe to their masters.

According to the order of nature, there is no inequality among the children of men. We are all sprung from the same stock, and on our entrance into the world we were all exposed to the same sufferings, the same weaknesses, and to the same appendages of mortality. The children of kings are not exempted. Even during the early part of life *the heir*, as St. Paul says, *differeth in nothing from a servant*.—According to the laws of religion, likewise, there is no inequality among the children of men. The mysteries of faith are proposed alike to all: the duties of charity are imposed equally on all: and the benefits of redemption are intended equally for all. With the Almighty *there is no exception of persons*. The inequality that exists between the children of men arises

~~and by from the nature of society.~~ Being formed to live in a state of dependance one upon another, we have each of us duties to perform ; and these duties vary according to the state in which we are. The great Creator, on whose will the social compact is founded, intends one for one state, and one for another. Although like the potter, ~~as St. Paul makes the comparison,~~ he makes use of the same clay in the formation of his vessels, still he makes some for honour, and some for dishonour. But whether for honour or dishonour, they are all equally dear to him, and formed to be alike partakers of his mercies.

There being no difference, therefore, in the eyes of the Creator, between one mortal being and another, what authority has man to make a difference, beyond what the nature of society requires? We, who like holy Job, may, with truth, say *to rottenness thou art my father, and to worms thou art my mother and my sister*, (Job xvii.) what right have we to treat a fellow-creature, our own flesh, with contempt, merely because he is placed in a state of dependance on us? Such conduct would be unjust : it would be an insult offered to him, who is equally his father and redeemer, as he is ours.

But, although nature and religion forbid us to treat any of our fellow-creatures in an unbecoming manner, we may yet follow that conduct in their regard which the well-being of society requires. We may lawfully refrain from

treating with familiarity those that are subject to us : we may keep them at a proper distance, and behave to them ~~in every respect~~ as to inferiors. They being the hands and feet of the body social, we may make use of them as such, and employ them in ~~hard~~ labour, or in other offices, according to the nature of the agreement between us. But our rights over them extend no farther. We are then to attend to the duties which we owe them both as fellow-creatures, and as fellow-christians.

In the first place, masters or mistresses are bound to treat their servants or dependants as fellow-creatures. Consequently, they must treat them with humanity. Servants have their feelings, as well as their masters : and no one has a right to hurt those feelings, unless they themselves give just cause for it. To be constantly harsh, ~~merciless~~, and ill-natured ; to be continually finding fault with what they do, even when there is reason to believe that they have done their best ; to impose upon them work beyond their strength, or to oblige them to work at unwholesome employments, or for a longer time than health will permit, are certainly forbidden by the feelings of humanity.—Humanity likewise will not allow the master or mistress to refuse proper food either in quality or quantity, to those who are subject to them, or not to grant proper time for that relaxation which nature requires.—Compassion, again, is a feeling which masters owe to their servants, ~~in~~

considered as
~~quality of being~~ their fellow-creatures. When illness comes upon them, they ought to be treated with tenderness and care, and the most effectual means taken to restore them to health. Of this we have a remarkable example in the Centurion ~~recorded in the words of my text.~~ He hesitated not to take a long journey in order to obtain the cure of his servant. In fact, what can be more opposite to the finer feelings of human nature, than for a master to treat with harshness a servant on the bed of sickness? What can be more cruel than to discard a servant from his employ, merely because ill health deprives him of his services for a time? Not that a master is bound to keep in his service one whose health or strength is not sufficient for the situation, or one ~~whose constitution is~~ ~~entirely broken~~ and who is never likely to be fit for service again. This would be more than what justice either to himself or to his servants would require. But how frequent is it that a mistress, who has enjoyed the benefit of the health of a servant, sends that servant away when a casual fit of illness renders her incapable of her work for a time; and sends her away to a home where perhaps few of the comforts of life are to be found, and little of that attention C. to be had which her state requires.—~~f~~ Compassion, again, ought to be shewn to the weaknesses of a servant. Every one is not gifted with the same abilities. If a mistress consent to keep in her employ a servant whose powers

of mind are inferior, no undue advantage ought she to take on that account ; much less ought she to upbraid her for what she cannot help, or ~~to abuse her with appellation epithets~~ for that deficiency of intellect, for which she will not be responsible even before a higher tribunal.

In the last place *justice* is due from a master or mistress to their servants. ~~If the servants be employed in hard labour, or in manufactories,~~ it is the duty of the master to pay them their just due for the work they perform. To find unnecessary fault with their work, and on false pretences to retain a part of the ~~amount~~ ~~to~~ price given for such work, is unworthy of a human being. It is the duty of the master to pay his servants their just wages in due time. Workmen in general depend upon their gains during the last week, for their support during the next. To refuse, therefore, to pay them in due time is to deprive them of their support for a time, or at least to expose them to difficulties, or losses which their poverty can ill afford. In fact, this refusal to pay workmen their wages, is an act of injustice of no ordinary ~~kind~~: it is one of the sins crying to heaven for vengeance: and severe will be the account which will be demanded at the last day, from masters who have been guilty of it.

These, in short, are the duties which masters owe to their servants ~~in quality of their being~~ their fellow-creatures. There are others which they owe them in quality of being fellow-chris-

tians. *If a man have not care of his own, and particularly of his servants, says St. Paul, he has denied his faith, and is worse than an infidel.*

(1 Tim. v.) This sentence chiefly refers to the care which ought to be paid to the spiritual welfare of servants. Servants have souls to save, as well as their masters: and time is required for the accomplishment of that great work. Now, as masters have the time of their servants at their own disposal, they deprive them of one of the means of saving their souls, if they do not give them that time, which ought to be devoted to it. A master or mistress, therefore, ought to allow time for their servants to hear mass on Sundays and holidays, to prepare themselves for the sacraments, and to attend to instruction, at least from time to time. On the Sundays and holidays, likewise, they ought to allow them time for private spiritual reading, when they cannot attend to public prayers. They ought, not only to allow them time, but exhort them to devote that time piously to its proper use, if they see them negligent and tepid. And if they see that they are ignorant of their duties, they ought to instruct them, or to take care that they are instructed by their pastor. On these points a superior ought to be positive in enforcing obedience from their dependants, for they will have to give account of their souls. If, however, the servants be not members of the Catholic Church, a different line of conduct is to be

followed. Of these it may be said in general terms, that their master or mistress cannot lawfully provide them with means of transgressing the laws of the Catholic Church, nor are they obliged to force them to observe duties, which their conscience, although an erroneous conscience, disavows. According to this, it is not allowable to provide meat for them on abstinence days, nor to give them leave to eat it, although previously provided. Nor is it lawful to oblige them to work on holidays, unless urgent circumstances require it. With respect to the other point, they are not obliged to force them to hear mass, to attend the Catholic instructions, or even their private family prayers. Although desirable to prevail on them by persuasion to attend to these things, they are not obliged, nor are they recommended to force them. To give them time and opportunity to attend on Sundays and even on holidays to spiritual duties, and to see that they do not mispend that time is incumbent on them: but if they will not attend the Catholic place of worship, it is not a duty to oblige them to attend to any other. The same time on those days ought to be allowed them as to Catholic servants, but no law will allow us to oblige others to follow, or to listen to doctrines, which we ourselves believe to be erroneous. We are not authorized to force others to act contrary to *their* conscience, nor are we allowed to recommend to them

to do those things which *our* conscience disapproves of.

This is a short enumeration of the duties which masters owe to servants. They are not of difficult performance. Provided ~~that~~ the mind is devoid of haughtiness or contempt of what is inferior, and provided that it is endued with the spirit of compassion, and christian piety, there is nothing in them but will be agreeable in the performance, and gratifying to the finer feelings of human nature.

But If, ~~however~~, there are duties incumbent on masters, there are duties incumbent on servants, ~~and duties as obligatory as those which I have above enumerated.~~ — In the first place, servants are bound to be subject. By the very act of entering into service, they engage to give up their own will in order to follow the will of another. ~~In fact, of what use would servants be to masters, were it to be otherwise?~~ It is for that purpose they are hired, and in due attention to it the very essence of servitude consists. Servants, therefore, are to consider that their first and principal duty is to do what they are ordered. I speak on the supposition that the orders are reasonable, and such as are according to the terms of the compact between them and their masters. And they are not only required to do what they are ordered, but to do it in the manner and at the time they are ordered. Whether it be agreeable to them or not, whether they approve of what is to be

done or not, is nothing to their purpose. It is their duty to obey, not to regulate. They may be allowed to remonstrate, ~~if~~ they foresee that strict observance will be injurious to their masters, or if they perceive that there is a more profitable way of fulfilling the order, than the one which was prescribed to them. But if their remonstrances are not attended to, then it is their duty to obey.

This being the case, how criminally negligent are those servants ~~in the performance of their principal duty~~, who are continually murmuring at the commands of their superiors; who obey with reluctance, except when the orders are agreeable to their own will; who do their work carelessly, and imperfectly! How doubly criminal are they, who refuse to do what they are ordered; or, if they do it, do it in such an evil manner, as to ~~defeat the intention, or even to injure~~ their employer? How doubly criminal, again, are they, who are resolved to have their own will, in opposition to the will, which they have bound themselves to obey, and who, by one contrivance or another, succeed in their determination!

It will be no ~~plea~~ excuse for servants to say that their masters are unreasonable in their orders, and that it is impossible to please them. They ought to have a more exalted motive for their obedience, than merely pleasing their employer. The state in which they are; is the state in which God has placed them. To

please God, therefore, ought to be their principal object ; and as strict obedience to the orders of superiors is pleasing to him, they ought to be satisfied, and seek for no other approbation. St. Paul says, (Eph. vi.) *Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters, according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the simplicity of your heart, as to Christ: not serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.* Were it even true that your masters were unreasonable in their orders, obedience is still due to them. St. Peter says, (1 Pet. ii.) *servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward, for this is thankworthy.*

Servants, likewise, are required to be just towards their employers. The property which is under their care, is not their own. It is only entrusted to them, and were they to destroy any part of it, or squander it away, they would be guilty ~~of an injustice equal to that~~ of theft, and would be bound to make restitution. Of this crime they are guilty, who, being employed in manufactories, wilfully or negligently spoil the articles which they have to finish, or who dilapidate their master's property, by not putting it to the best advantage, or who, when a press of orders arrives, and a great good to the master depends on their being completed, neglect their work, and are thereby the cause of loss. — They likewise are guilty of this crime,

who, in a domestic life, waste or spoil what is under their care; who give away what they are not authorized to give; who ~~take~~ take to their own use, what it is not intended they should have; or who, by their negligence or carelessness, break or destroy the things entrusted to their charge.

These are the principal duties of servants, and, like those imposed on masters, they are not difficult of observance. A willing, humble, and pious mind, is all that is required. The state of service is not indeed the most pleasing to flesh and blood. The pride of self-love disdains controul: and of this pride there is oftentimes more to be found in servants than in masters. In fact, experience declares, that a good master or mistress is easier to be found than a good servant. And whence comes this? The state of service is not a disgraceful state; nor is obedience to the will of their superior in that state, a humiliation, or degradation: Whence, therefore, comes it? From no other source than their want of religion. They do not submit to that state, because such is the will of God: they do not consider God as their greater Master: they do not perform the duties of that state for the purpose of pleasing God; and they do not consider, that on a due performance of the duties of that state their salvation depends. Their own will, their ease and convenience, and the paltry emoluments which they hope to

receive, have more weight with them, and regulate their conduct more powerfully than any other considerations. Thus they make their life a life of restraint and misery, and deprive themselves of all the merit in another world, which they had it in their power to acquire.

Oh ! how different would be the state of society, were these great duties of masters and servants properly fulfilled ! How pleasant, how prosperous would ~~domestic concerns be carried on~~, were masters and mistresses to treat their servants at all times as fellow-creatures and fellow-christians ; and were servants to consider their superiors, not only as fellow-creatures and fellow-christians, but as superiors placed over them by God, by obedience to whose will, as to the will of God, they ~~were~~ to prepare themselves for an eternal inheritance. Why then will not Christians attend to these duties ? They are of serious importance, even as to this world : but they are of much more serious importance as to the next. You, therefore, who have others under your command, follow the example of the humble centurion, and consult the welfare and comforts of your dependants, at the same time that you require them to be obedient to your orders. You, likewise, who are placed in a state of dependance, fulfil your duties carefully and piously, for the love of God. Follow the examples of the soldiers and servants of this same centurion, of

whom he said : *To this man I say, Go, and he goeth ; and to another, Come, and he cometh ; and to my servant, Do this, and he doth it.* (Matt. viii.) You may then be heaping up treasures in heaven, and in due time, you shall reap, not failing.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

ON THE TRIALS OF THE JUST MAN.

Behold a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the ship was covered with waves, but he was asleep... MATT. viii. 24.

IN the gospel of this Sunday an instructive lesson is presented to us. The ship, in which our Lord and his disciples were crossing the sea, was overtaken by a severe tempest, and in danger of being lost. During the time, our Lord was asleep. The disciples, in the greatest alarm, awakened him, and, in the most pressing terms, solicited his protection from the danger that threatened them: *Lord! save us, we are perishing*. Their prayers were granted, and in a moment, at the command of Jesus, the winds and waves were hushed into a perfect calm.

The just man, during his voyage over the boisterous ocean of this world, is exposed to the severest storms, and continually in fear of perishing. His Lord sometimes appears to pay

no attention to his perilous state, as if he were asleep. But, no sooner does the danger seem to accumulate round him, and the enemy threatens to overwhelm him, than he suffers himself to be awakened, as it were, and by earnest prayer is induced immediately to exert his power, and produce a calm.

This is the consoling subject, to which I wish to call your attention on this day.

In the beginning of my subject, however, it will be proper to state the question in its true light. There are in this world perils and trials of two kinds: the one threatening to prevent prosperity and happiness during the time of life, the other comprising the obstacles to peace and happiness in the next. The one is chiefly dreaded by the children of the world, the other by the children of the promise. The pious Christian is not alarmed at the one, nor is the worldling terrified at the other. The pious Christian looks for tribulation and crosses during his abode in the flesh, and is solicitous only for the one thing necessary. The worldling is so absorpt in the cares of the world, and so eager after the riches and pleasures, which are to be found in this place of exile, that he exposes himself wilfully to the dangers, and is ready to suffer the consequences of a spiritual shipwreck, rather than forego the advantages which the world holds out to him. The just man is convinced that his soul is his all; and that, if his soul be lost, his all is lost. He trembles, therefore,

for his safety, when he considers the dangers to which he is exposed, and he calls earnestly on the Lord for help, when temptation comes violently upon him.

These, therefore, are the trials and dangers, out of which the Lord will not fail to deliver his servants. As for the others, namely, the trials and afflictions of the world, and which alone are dreaded by the children of the world, to these he is pleased to expose them, and frequently, in the greatest rigour, during the greater part of their lives. His intentions, however, are intentions of mercy, willing thereby to detach them more and more from the perishable things here below, and to prepare them for their eternal crown.

In the first place, the just are frequently exposed to the privations of poverty. The world seems to be given as an inheritance to the children of the wicked; whilst the good are left as strangers and pilgrims in the land of their nativity. Sinners are exalted like the cedars of Lebanon, and look down with a kind of contempt on the lowly virtuous; as if they were outcasts, and unworthy to partake of their vain amusements, or share of their perishable possessions. The rich man is clothed in fine linen, and feasts sumptuously, and Lazarus is deemed unworthy to enjoy the crumbs, which fall from his table. This is not unfrequently the order of Providence with regard to the just man. And what are the effects produced by it in his

mind? No other than effects the most dignified, the most exalted. Assisted as he is by the grace of God, he despises the world: he cares not for its pleasures, or its goods. His only desire is to have a sufficiency of food and raiment; and these, he knows, will be given to him, provided he seeks the kingdom of God and his justice before all other things. He is perfectly independent of the world. He beholds the pomp and splendor, with which some are surrounded, he hears of their sumptuous feasts and merriments, their joyous revellings, and gay amusements; and his heart is not moved. In his poverty, he looks up to heaven. With the eyes of faith, he penetrates the veil which conceals those happy mansions from human sight. There he beholds the unfading glories, which encircle the brows of the just already made perfect. He seems to hear their concerts of eternal praise. His heart gladdens at the scene, and his only solicitude is to prepare himself in due time to be united with them. *He counts all things but loss, as St. Paul said, for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ his Lord, for whom he has suffered the loss of all things, and counts them but as dung, that he may gain Christ... if by any means he may attain to the resurrection of the dead.* (Phil. iii.)

The just man, again, frequently experiences from his fellow-creatures the most humiliating treatment. He is traduced as a hypocrite. He

is ridiculed as a fool. He is trodden, as it were, under foot. He is considered as a parable of reproach. How painful to human nature are trials like these! Pride is the ruling passion of the breast: and so deeply has it fixed its roots, that unless nature be entirely subdued, and reduced into the subjection of the gospel, every humiliation is severely felt. Contempt or calumny cannot be endured in submissive silence by any, but by the true followers of the meek and humble, and persecuted Jesus. The just man, animated with this spirit, is no more affected by contempt, than he is puffed up by applause: he is no more agitated by persecutions and calumnies, than he is rejoiced by favours and honours. He beholds more attractive charms in humility, than he does in pride. His only solicitude is, to enjoy the friendship of his great Lord and Master, and to be accounted worthy the fellowship of the saints above. He knows that *the friendship of this world*, as St. James says, *is the enemy of God*, and that *they, who would be the friends of this world, become the enemies of God*. (James iv.) He knows that he has no right to claim that the secrets of his heart should be revealed to mortal man, or that his true character should be known and acknowledged during his abode on earth. He, therefore, joyfully consents to observe an humble silence, until that great day arrives, when every thing *that is secret shall be*

revealed, and every thing that is hidden shall be brought to light; when honour, everlasting honour, shall be given to whom honour is due, praise, to whom praise, glory, to whom glory.

It not unfrequently happens, likewise, that, by the secret, and all-wise judgments of God, the just man is afflicted with bodily pains, and crosses of various kinds, more severely than the dissolute, or tepid christian. These are trials, which generally turn into sorrow all the joys and festivities of worldlings: and seldom are they endured by them with patience and resignation. You yourselves have heard the lamentations of friends in sickness: you have witnessed their sighs when in domestic troubles or afflictions. You have compassionated their sufferings, and, perhaps, have solicited heaven to grant them relief. In this there was nothing criminal. We are not required to be insensible to all human feelings. But, afflictions like these, do not diminish the piety of the just man, nor do they cause him to neglect any part of his accustomed duties. He is habituated to consider sufferings as his gain. He receives them as blessings from the hands of God, and he submits to them, as to the means appointed to purify his soul from every defilement, and to prepare it for heaven. He subdues the feelings of human nature to such a degree, as to rejoice in afflictions, and glory in sufferings. Although he may appear depressed, and almost overpowered, in the eyes of this world, his soul is vi-

gorous. He sees the hand that chastises him. He acknowledges the justice of his treatment. He knows that the more he suffers in this world, the less he will have to suffer in the next: and he is convinced that *the sufferings of this world are not worthy to be compared with the joys that shall be revealed in him hereafter*. Upheld by these considerations, and assisted by the grace of God, he labours to repress every sigh, and to keep down even the involuntary emotions which human nature invariably feels in the midst of excruciating pains, or severe afflictions. The lives of the saints present to us wonderful examples of perfection in this kind.

Thus, my brethren, we see that the tribulations, which are so much dreaded by worldly men, make little, or no impression on the mind of the truly just man. He, in fact, does not consider them as tribulations. So far from being terrified, when they come upon him, so far from being dismayed when they surround him on every side, so far from crying out: *Lord save me, I am perishing*; he considers them as prosperous gales, which are to waft him more securely into the haven of eternal peace.

We have now, however, to speak of trials of another kind, and dangers of another description, namely, the trials of temptation, and the danger of being overcome by them. At the sight of these, the just man is terrified: but the worldling regards them not. He trembles at

the prospect of the precipice, on the brink of which he is standing : but the worldling, full of mirth and glee, runs heedlessly on, without caring for the consequences.—In the midst of these trials and dangers it is that the just man cries out: *Lord save me, I am perishing*. And it is to him, when labouring in the midst of these spiritual storms and tempests, that the consoling assurance is given in this day's gospel, namely, that the Lord, in his good time, will command the winds and the waves, and produce a calm.

Yes, my brethren, the dread of not persevering to the end, and securing the salvation of his soul, causes the just man to live in a constant state of fear and trembling. His greatest delight is to serve God in this world, and his greatest solicitude is to enjoy him in the next. He knows that, when compared with this, there is nothing in this world worthy of his care, and nothing that can make him amends, if this be neglected. Feeling, therefore, the weakness of human nature within him, and dreading lest, in an evil hour, he should be seduced by the violence or suddenness of temptation, he is always in a state of alarm. He has experienced how sweet is the Lord, and he prizes the delights of a pure conscience beyond all treasures, and beyond all amusements. He would not exchange them for all that this world can give, not even for the whole world itself. These are the present feelings of his mind : but whe-

ther he shall persevere, or not, in these sentiments, is a secret hidden from his eyes : and this constitutes his pain. Many there have been, who, for a time, have walked in the commandments of God without reproof, and have nevertheless fallen, and fallen so as never to rise again. Of this he is well aware. And, in addition to the examples recorded in Holy Writ, perhaps he has had examples of the same kind, even in the circle of his own acquaintance. He knows not but that he himself may fall a victim in the same manner, and, instead of continuing to love and serve God, may become dissipated and dissolute, die in that state, and be for ever separated from him, who is now the dearest object of his affections.

His fears are not without cause. His enemy—the devil, is an experienced and determined adversary; and is not to be overcome but by continued watchfulness, and an uninterrupted series of victories. His object in the beginning is not to lead into sin, but to disturb the mind. He knows that the soul of the just man is strongly fortified, and that his own powers are circumscribed. He therefore prepares to carry on a regular siege, rather than attempt to take the place by storm. When he suggests temptations, he does not expect that they will be yielded to. When he multiplies temptations he does not look for victory. His great object on these occasions is either to disturb the mind, or to habituate it to look temptation in the face;

and thereby diminish the aversion, which it has hitherto felt. And how often has he succeeded by these means? How many have there been, who, by this continual harassing of the enemy, have been induced, at first, to pay less attention to their prayers,—then, to neglect a part of their daily exercises,—then to feel less relish for the things of God,—and then to fall into a state of tepidity. In order to exemplify this point, I will select one particular vice, which the enemy suggests more violently perhaps than any other; but with no hopes of success in the beginning. How many have there been, who, during the days of their fervour, were assailed with long and violent temptations to impurity? At first, they turned away from them with disgust and abhorrence. Being induced to pay less attention to their spiritual duties, this disgust by degrees diminished. The violence of the temptation increasing, they at length, stole an unguarded glance, or dwelt with some degree of complacency on an improper thought. Their conscience became alarmed for a time. The enemy, encouraged by his success, redoubled his efforts. They fell again into the same, and after a time, into greater faults, till at length they consented to the crime itself in all its turpitude. As one fall too frequently begets another, and as the gratification of one passion leads to the gratification of another, they, who were once innocent, and pious, happy within, and respected without,

at length became abandoned and hardened sinners, objects of abomination in the sight of God, and of scorn and contempt to the infernal spirits, who laboured so successfully for their destruction.

In this manner, my brethren, have thousands been led astray from the paths of virtue, and have fallen, never to rise again. The just man sees the danger before him, and knowing that there is no security for himself, he is in a state of constant alarm. He trembles at the idea of becoming another example of the weakness of human nature. Every slight fall, or every trifling imperfection redoubles his fears, lest he should proceed to greater crimes, and at length forfeit that delicacy of conscience, which is the safeguard of innocence. The greater is his love of God, the more does he dread the idea of being eternally separated from him; and the more ardently does he wish to be freed from the body of this death, and to be dissolved, and be with Christ, lest he should be seduced by the enemy of his salvation, and become a rebel against his God, before the moment of dissolution arrived.—These, my brethren, are the storms and tempests, which assail the just man in his passage over the ocean of this world. These are the dangers, which he dreads; and from these he prays to be delivered.

But, although it may be said that these fears are a severe trial, they are not an evil. On the contrary, they are attended with great benefit.

They keep him humble. They make him more in earnest in the service of God: and, in all probability, they will lead him to final perseverance. The Lord has promised to support the weak, and give his grace to the humble. And, although he may appear sometimes to be asleep, whilst his servant is struggling in the midst of the waves, he will not fail to rise, and come to his assistance in the greatest peril, and restore a calm. This is his gracious promise; and this consoling assurance is given us in the gospel of this day.

Now, my brethren, it will be profitable for you to consider how far these reflections are applicable to you. Which is it that you dread the most? the trials, which the lovers of the world dread, and which the just despise; or the trials, which cause the just to tremble, and which the lovers of the world disregard? If you discover, upon examination, that the great object of your fears, is temporal affliction and distress, and that the evil of sin, or the loss of the love of God, is only a secondary cause of alarm, and makes little or no alteration in your usual spirit of gaiety and mirth, be assured that there is a deficiency in you of an essential nature, and that a different spirit is to be imbibed, before you will be entitled to the rewards of the just.—If, on the other hand, temporal afflictions and calamities make only a faint impression on your spirits for a time, and your chief dread is the loss of the love of God by

sin, and an eternal separation from him, then you may entertain the comfortable assurance that you are not of the number of the children of the world. You may depend upon it, that you are under the protection of the Most High, and that in him you may put your trust. You may rest assured, that *he will deliver you from the snare of the hunter, and of the sharp sword; that, although a thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand, the evil shall not come nigh unto you: that, he will be with you in your trouble, and will deliver you, and glorify you: that he will fill you with length of days, and, in the end, will show you his salvation.*

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

ON THE WISDOM AND GOODNESS OF GOD IN
ENDURING THE WICKEDNESS OF SINNERS.

And the servants said to him: wilt thou that we go, and gather it up? And he said: No, lest while you gather up the cockle, you root up the wheat also together with it. Let both grow up until the harvest. MATT. xxiii. 28, &c.

THE parable, read on this day, explains the motives why the Almighty patiently endures, and seems to pass over unnoticed the wickedness of sinners, at the time that their sins cry to heaven for vengeance, and justice demands that they should be swept from the face of the earth. The explanation of the parable is given by our Lord himself. He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man, and the field, in which the seed is sown, is the world. The good seed are the children of the kingdom, or the faithful servants of God: and the cockle are the children of the wicked one, or sinners. The enemy, that soweth this seed,

is the devil: and the harvest is the end of the world. This, in few words, is the explanation of the parable.

The great Creator formed this world, and peopled it for the purpose of training up souls for heaven. It was his will that all, and every one whom he placed therein, should be good seed, or, true and faithful servants. Nothing was wanting on his part, to produce this desirable effect. But, as his wisdom and justice had ordained to give free-will to man, the enemy—the devil, took advantage of this circumstance, and by his artful suggestions and allurements prevailed, and still continues to prevail over multitudes to prefer him and his slavery before the glorious liberty of the faithful children.—Thus have his designs been counteracted: and in consequence of it, this world, instead of being the habitation of faithful souls alone, is become a babel of confusion, the habitation of drunkards, of adulterers, of profane swearers, and of wicked men of every description. The number of the good is very small, when compared with the number of the reprobate.

Solicitous for the preservation of these few, the Almighty restrains his anger:—he will not extirpate the wicked. He will not suffer that *the cockle be gathered up, lest the wheat be rooted up together with it.* He wills, for the sake of his beloved few, that they both grow up until the harvest, that is, until the end of the world. Then it is, that he will cause the cockle to be

bound up, and thrown into unquenchable fire ; but the wheat he will gather into his barns. A few reflections on this subject will be instructive and edifying to you.

With many it is a matter of astonishment, that God, whom they consider as the God of justice, should suffer sin to remain so long unpunished: and from this forbearance of Almighty Justice, take occasion to assert, that there is either no account to be taken hereafter of the sins of men, or at least that they are not so displeasing in the sight of God as they are represented to be by his ministers. For, they say, if the Almighty, the eternal God, hates sin with an infinite hatred, why does he not, in his justice, immediately destroy the man who dares to sin? But, in this parable, we see that the goodness and wisdom of God restrains the arm of his vengeance, in order to promote the welfare of his chosen servants. The elect are as dear to him *as the apple of his eye*. (Ps. xvi.) His whole designs, in the government of the world, are to protect *them* from evil, and to bring them forward towards their true country. He does not always bestow upon them, with a liberal hand, the things of this world. On the contrary, although he made this world principally for them, he wills that they should be deprived of their rights by the malice of the wicked; or, according to the words of the gospel, that the good seed should be nearly choaked up by the cockle, in order that, by their patient

suffering, they should be prepared for another and better world, which he had prepared for them. For he knew that the enjoyment of their rights here, would, on many occasions, weaken their desires, and restrain their endeavours to prepare themselves for their inheritance hereafter. Out of love, therefore, for them, he suffers the wicked to prosper, and seems to take no notice of their multiplied enormities.

Were he, indeed, to sweep away from the face of the earth, every obstinate transgressor against his holy laws, were he to rain down fire from heaven, and consume the avaricious, the voluptuous, the intemperate, the unjust, the liars, the profane swearers, the lovers of the world, and the despisers of sanctity, and of holy exercises, what a general devastation would take place! To what a state would the world be reduced! The earth would become almost an uninhabited, a barren, uncultivated wilderness. The remaining few would hardly be able to provide for themselves. In fact, the designs of God in favour of the good grain, or, of the elect, would, in part, be frustrated. For, were these judgments immediately to take place, the number of the just would be diminished. There is not one amongst us, but has in the list of his ancestors one or more wicked men. There is not a saint in heaven, whose pedigree is not defiled by the crimes of one, or more, of his forefathers. The pedigree of our Lord himself, according to his humanity, is not exempt,

If the severity, therefore, of God's judgments had been inflicted on these transgressors, their posterity would not have received existence; and, of course, the holy men, who sprang from them, would never have had a being. In the same manner, in after times, many just men will be found amongst the descendants of those, who are now in open rebellion against God. May it not, therefore, be said, that, if these wicked men were to be destroyed, the moment they transgressed, these just men, whom the Lord in his mercy has destined to eternal glory, would never be called into existence? Ah! my brethren, were there no other motive, to induce the Almighty to spare the wicked for a time, this alone would be sufficient. Truly, his infinite love for his chosen servants, will not suffer *the cockle to be gathered up, lest the wheat be also rooted up together with it.*

Many, and particularly in these times of irreligion and doubt, will say, that, if instant death were to be the immediate consequence of sin, men would be constrained to believe, and the number of sinners would be reduced almost to nothing. A solitary wretch, now and then, would be the only victim of the wrath of heaven. For, where is the man, who would disbelieve, when he found that disbelief was instantly followed by sudden death? Where is the man who would dare to act in opposition to the dictates of his conscience, if he invariably found that such opposition caused the culprit to be

instantly hurried before the tribunal of his offended God?—But, how would such severity on the part of God, agree with the rules of strict, and unerring justice? A greater number, we will allow, would be induced to serve God. But what would be the motive? Would it be through love—that amiable motive, which ought to influence all our actions? No: they would serve him through fear. They would not have that free liberty of doing as they please, in which merit principally consists. Were a parent to act in this manner towards his child: were he to stand over him with a lash, and to apply it severely every time, and at the very instant that he dared to disobey his commands, what gratification would he feel from his ready obedience? what probable idea could he form of the real dispositions of his mind? what degree of merit would he think that he was entitled to?—Our state would be the same, were God to act towards sinners with the severity above described. The dread of his judgments would prevent the exercise of our free will. We should not, indeed, be necessitated to obey; nor would the power of acting as we please be taken from us. But what is power, without the *will*? and what *will* should we, or could we have, when such evils were hanging over us? what *will* should we have to follow the inclinations of the flesh, when we saw that instant death, and eternal punishments would be the consequence?—In a state, like this, could it

be said that we acquired merit by ready obedience? Could it be said that we justly acquired a title to an eternal reward; or to any reward at all? No, my brethren, such obedience would be nothing better than the effects of self-love: it would owe its birth to that natural instinct of self-preservation, which is implanted in the hearts of all created beings. — Truly, such severity on the part of God would not be consistent with the rules of strict and unerring justice.

Moreover, such instantaneous judgments would produce the most pernicious effects in the minds even of those, who sincerely desired to serve and love God through the purest motives. I myself, for example, supposing that I was of the number, (and it is my desire so to be) of those who sincerely wish to love God, and to serve him, more for the sake of his own adorable perfections, than from any motives of interested self-love, I certainly should stand in need of every encouragement. Servile fear ought to be avoided: for servile fear and sincere love seldom unite together. Now, were I to witness these severities of God's judgments; were I to hear that such or such a person had been suddenly cut off after the commission of a crime: were I to witness the sudden dissolution of a dear parent, a relative, or friend, and knew that it was on account of an act of rebellion to God, the consequence of which was eternal reprobation, how should I be able to preserve my

peace of mind ? Would it be possible for me to go on, fulfilling my duties with calm resignation, and placid tranquillity ? No : I should be overwhelmed with terror and affright. My love for God would be changed into a dread of his judgments. I should be in constant alarm lest some others of my dearest friends should transgress, and be suddenly snatched from me. I should be in constant alarm for my own safety, lest, in an unguarded moment, I should sin, and be instantly consigned to a miserable eternity. A moderate degree of fear, I acknowledge, is necessary ; for, with fear and trembling we are to work out our salvation. But the fear, which this severity would produce in my mind, would be attended with the most serious consequences : it would be the greatest stumbling-block to the salvation of the souls of men. It would almost banish the pure love of God from the earth, and substitute in its place sordid fear, and interested self-love. This our Lord well knew ; and therefore he said : *Gather not up the cockle, lest you root up the wheat together with it. Let both grow up until the harvest.*

There are other considerations, however, which, according to revelation, induce the all-wise Ruler of the universe to suspend the arm of his justice, and to suffer the wicked to live on in a state of seeming peace and security. The first is in direct opposition to the doctrine of those who believe in predestination, or who imagine that all the damned are damned from

necessity, without having a chance offered to them of serving and loving God, and saving their souls : I mean, a desire on the part of the Almighty, that time should be given to these rebellious souls to enter seriously into themselves, and *bring forth worthy fruits of repentance*. (Luke iii.) For, notwithstanding the enormity of their sins, the God of all mercies is ready to receive them again into his favour. He has even declared, and confirmed his declaration with an oath, that *he willeth not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live*. (Ezech. xxxiii.)

In the second place it may be said, that he suffers sinners to remain on the earth for the trial and sanctification of his faithful servants. The Providence of God is chiefly extended over those who serve him, or who will hereafter serve him with a free good will. These he favours. These he cherishes under the wings of his paternal mercy, and causes every thing to contribute to the sanctification of their souls in this life, and to their salvation in the next. The wickedness of sinners is made to produce these desirable effects. It exercises the piety of these faithful souls. It gives them opportunities of testifying their love for God, and their hatred of sin. It gives them opportunities of showing forth their zeal for the honour and glory of their Maker, and their hatred of his mortal enemy—the devil. It provides them with means of exercising charity towards their per-

secutors, by praying and labouring for their reformation and conversion. It instils sentiments of humility into their minds, by causing them to fear lest they likewise fall away in the time of temptation. It inspires them with confidence in the future mercies of God, on account of the extraordinary favours they have hitherto received; and with diffidence in their own strength, seeing so many thousands on every side, who have fallen victims to their own weakness and negligence. It causes them to be earnest in prayer, and diligent in the performance of all christian duties, fearing lest negligence in small things should lead them on to a state of tepidity, and tepidity hurry them on to a state of actual rebellion against their God. It contributes to take off their affections from the things of this world, and to fix them on heaven, seeing that the love of perishable things is the chief cause of the wickedness and impiety, which reigns in the universe.

These are some of the advantages which the just reap from their intermixture with sinners. There are others of a different kind. Thousands in the kingdom of heaven are indebted for their present happiness to the persecutions, which have been raised by tyrants against the Church of God. All and every one of the saints may be said to owe an increase, at least, of their happiness, to the persecutions which they experienced from wicked men during their earthly pilgrimage. It has always been the policy of

the enemy, to throw every obstacle in the way of the just ; either by endeavouring to allure them to vice, by holding out the deceitful pleasures of the world, or to deter them from virtue by the persecutions of worldly men. He stirs up his agents to despise them, to calumniate them, to oppress them, to tread them under foot, and to make them parables of reproach. (Wisd. v.) He stirs them up to injure them in their persons, to injure them in their property, to injure them in their good name. He leaves no means untried, either to deter them from the practice of virtue altogether, or to disturb the tranquillity of their minds, and prevent them from attaining to a supereminent degree of perfection. These are his endeavours. But the infinite goodness of God turns all to the advantage of his faithful servants. By the patient endurance of them, they satisfy God for the guilt of their past sins. By patient endurance, they learn to submit their will entirely, and without reserve, to the will of their Maker. By patient endurance, they learn to walk in the footsteps of their meek and suffering Jesus : and by patient endurance, they are purified, like gold in the furnace, and prepared for the possession of their eternal inheritance. '

Thus, my brethren, are things arranged in this world in the way that will hasten on the Elect to the possession of their eternal crown. An all-wise God bears with the sins of men, for the sake of his servants. He refuses not to let the unjust

partake of the rains of heaven, that the just may receive necessary moisture: he wills not that the cockle be gathered up, lest the wheat be rooted up together with it. But this state of things is not to last always. The harvest will come. The day of judgment is only delayed for a time. Then he will cause the cockle to be separated from the wheat, and he will cast it into unquenchable fire. Then he will take final vengeance, once for all.

Oh! let us admire the inscrutable ways of God to man. At the same time, let us look to ourselves, and see whether we have reason to reckon ourselves in the number of his faithful servants. If our conscience bear testimony that we are not deficient, in any matter of weight, in the observance of our duties towards God and our neighbours, we may comfort ourselves with the assurance that we are of the good grain, and that the dews of heaven will fall upon us, and nourish us, till such time as we are brought to maturity. We may comfort ourselves with the assurance, that all the calumnies, injuries, affronts, and persecutions, which we endure from men, whether from sinners or from the virtuous, (for even the virtuous have sometimes been deceived by the calumnies of others, and have persecuted the innocent) we may comfort ourselves, I say, with the assurance, that all will turn to our good, and will contribute to the possession of our crown.

But, if we cannot flatter ourselves that all is right between us and God ; if our consciences accuse us of open violations of the laws of God, truly may it be said that the prospect before us is awful. The judgments of the Almighty are deferred only for a time. However we may seem to fatten on the earth, like the cockle, the harvest will quickly come, and then we shall be cut down without mercy, and cast into unquenchable fire. Whatever authority may be given to us over the humble servants of God : however much we may abuse them, and calumniate them, and tread them under our feet, their reward for patient endurance will be laid up for them, and our punishment for persecuting them will not long be deferred. Oh ! let us not be of the number of the reprobate. Let us rather court humiliations and contempt for the love of Jesus. Let us endeavour to be of the number of the faithful servants of the Most High. Let us forsake our evil ways, and turn to the Lord our God. (Eccl. xvii.) No one is a reprobate of necessity. There is always a door open for repenting sinners. However grievous their sins may be, they are not beyond the power of God to pardon. In fact, he himself hath declared that he willeth not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live. (Ezech. xxxiii.) Sinners, I exhort you therefore to repent and amend. Attend to this my remonstrance, and you may rest assured that, from vessels of wrath, you

will become vessels of election. And, if you persevere to the end in the practice of virtue, you may enjoy the comfortable assurance, that you will, hereafter, be made partakers with the saints in the fellowship of eternal glory.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

ON THE GENERAL INFLUENCE WHICH PIETY
EXERCISES OVER THE MIND OF THE
TRUE CHRISTIAN.

The kingdom of heaven is like to Leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened. MATT. xiii. 33.

IN the parable, which was the substance of the gospel on Sunday last, the kingdom of heaven was taken for the kingdom of God in this world; or, for the whole congregation of mankind, in which the good and the bad, the wheat and the cockle, are mixed confusedly together. In the gospel of this day, the kingdom of God is taken in a different sense, and conveys to us a lesson of another kind:—it is taken for the kingdom of God in the heart of the pious christian; and it describes, in an impressive manner, the effect which is produced, by the spirit of religion, in the general tenor of his life.—I will simplify

it in the following manner. As the *leaven*, which the woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, caused the whole of it *to enter into a state of fermentation, and to become leavened*, so does *religion*, when it is deeply fixed in the heart, *take possession of all its powers, and infuse its spirit into all its affections*. It becomes enamoured of piety, and proposes to itself the honour and glory of God, and its own sanctification, as the only objects of its desires and actions. The soul becomes *leavened*, as the gospel expresses it, and she may truly be said to possess the kingdom of God within her.

This view of the subject presents a spacious field for our consideration. Here we see the nature of true piety, and the effects which it necessarily produces in the mind. Here we see the state in which we ourselves ought to be, in order to form a part of the kingdom of God in this world. Here we see what is necessary to be attended to, in order to be found worthy to possess the kingdom of God hereafter. Be attentive to the few reflections, which I shall present to you on this subject.

“My love is my weight,” says St. Augustine, “by that am I carried whithersoever I am carried.” The object which engages the affections of the soul, will necessarily engross her attention. Love is the main spring which directs her in almost all the occurrences of life. The *will* itself is subject to the influence of love: Hence we see that the man, whose affections

are fixed on the vanities and pleasures of the world, is continually seeking after dissipation and amusements:—that the man, whose great object is ambition, labours incessantly in the pursuit of honours and titles, and catches at the bubble—reputation, even in the cannon's mouth:—that the man, whose darling passion is the love of money, endeavours to turn every thing to profit, and makes the amassing of riches the only object of his solicitude, and the almost exclusive subject of his thoughts:—that the man, whose *god is his belly, and whose glory is his shame*, is panting almost incessantly after the pleasures of eating and drinking, or after those vile gratifications, which ought not so much as to be named amongst christians.—We see the same, when the affections are fixed on mental acquirements, the *arts and sciences*. The philosopher, the poet, the artist, &c. have their thoughts almost incessantly fixed on the object of their pursuit, and seem to live for that alone.

Thus it is with the children of men. It is in fact the nature of man. Their love is their weight. The chief object of their affections, is the chief object of their thoughts; and to the attainment of that object are devoted their labours and studies.

From this we may learn, what effect will be produced in the soul, when God is the chief object of her affections. In him will be centered her thoughts and solitudes. To him

will be directed her labours and studies. His *will* will be her will: and what is most pleasing to him, will be most pleasing to her. This disposition will not continue with her for a time only. It will be permanent. It will never cease until she withdraws her affections from this great object, and fixes them again on perishable things. It is in Christ that she will live, and move, and exist: and the only completion of her desires will be, to be dissolved and to be with him in the mansions of his eternal glory.

From this short view it may be collected how incorrect are the ideas of those, who imagine that the kingdom of God is established in their hearts by certain *experiences*, as they call them, or pretended admonitions of the spirit, while at the same time they are wedded to the world, and to worldly gratifications; and vainly conclude that they are justified from sin, and rendered incapable of sinning any more; that they are admitted into the number of the elect, and that, die when they will, they are certain of eternal happiness.—It may be collected, likewise, that their ideas are incorrect, who imagine that faith alone, or a strong confidence in the all-sufficient merits of Christ, is the only requisite for salvation, thereby excluding the necessity on our parts of corresponding with the graces of God, of doing any thing, that is good, or of repenting of our past offences. In fact, ideas of this kind are the vain devices of the

depraved heart of man, and tend to nothing less than the demolishing the wall of separation between virtue and vice, and flattering sinners with the idea that they are as acceptable in the sight of God as the doers of the word.

It may likewise be collected, that the ideas of those members of the Catholic Church are incorrect, who imagine that the kingdom of God is established within them, merely because they recite long prayers, frequent the sacraments, relieve the distressed, endure persecutions, or are ready to submit even to death itself, in defence of their religion, when at the same time they are devoid of the spirit of charity, are unmortified in their affections, and are seeking the gratification of their own feelings, rather than the honour and glory of God.

Very different from all this is the kingdom of God, when established in the soul. This kingdom is no other than the true spirit of enlightened piety. When that spirit is received and encouraged, it pervades every power: it purges out by degrees, the old leaven of concupiscence, and exercises a general influence over her whole conduct. When that spirit is fully established, it animates the whole soul with divine love: it suffers not a single fibre of the heart to be attached to any created being or thing, but with reference to him. It places before her eyes in their true colours, the false charms and allurements, and follies of a vain world, and induces her to take off her affections entirely

from them. It causes her to labour strenuously and successfully in subjecting all her passions to the motions of grace; and enables her, in every action, and in every occurrence of life, to have no other object in view but the honour and glory of God, and her own salvation.

However, to present this subject before your eyes in the clearest light, I will describe the general conduct of a christian, in whose soul the kingdom of God has been established, and who has experienced the effects of that heaven of piety; by the operation of which, he is changed from a child of vanity and folly, from a child longing only after momentary gratifications, into a true servant of God, who looks to the completion of all his hopes in the enjoyment of his Creator, in a happy eternity. A description of this kind will be like a mirror, reflecting the features of that amiable character, which every one of you ought to seek to acquire.—The true christian, at all times, looks up to heaven, as his only true country. His life in this world he considers as nothing better than a state of exile, a banishment from his true home. The things of this world he values no more than as they are necessary to support his existence, or to enable him to endure the fatigues and labours of his pilgrimage. He places not his happiness in them: nor is he solicitous or anxious about them; knowing that He, who clothes the lilies of the fields, and feeds the birds of the air, will not leave him desti-

tute.—If superabundance be given to him, he squanders it not away in useless pleasures, or thoughtless prodigality. He considers his possessions not as his own, but as goods entrusted to him, to be employed in the manner, which will be agreeable to the will of his great Master—the giver and proprietor of all earthly things. He regulates his expenses according to his station in life : and after having reserved what is necessary for the decent establishment of his family, he endeavours with the rest, to draw down blessings from heaven by works of charity.—If he is placed in a state of dependance, or poverty, he is cheerfully resigned to it. He labours for his daily bread with patience and resignation. He enters upon his work with the conviction that it is the will of God; and his only solicitude is to fulfil it carefully and diligently. If he gain more than what is necessary for his homely subsistence, he does not appropriate the overplus to the gratification of his passions, nor does he hoard it up with anxious solicitude. Although prudence suggests to him, the propriety of preparing for the evil day, he looks up to God as his great Master, and is ready to part with his little savings, whenever it shall please him to take it away, or he gladly devotes it to those purposes, which he graciously points out to him.—If it be the will of God that he acquire not, by his daily labour, a sufficiency for a comfortable subsistence, he does not repine. He receives the little, which

he earns, with thankfulness. He endures privations with a willing mind ; and he continues to rely on the providence of God, knowing that he will be faithful to his promises ; and, consequently, that as long as he seeks his kingdom and his justice in the first place, a sufficiency for his support will be given to him. (Matt. v.)

Thus does the christian, in whose soul the kingdom of God is established, bless and praise the Author of his existence, in prosperity and in adversity. The will of God alone is his will : and he knows that he cannot be wholly submissive to this his will, unless he is submissive to his will in all temporal concerns.—Sometimes, indeed, he indulges in innocent amusements : but his motive is, because human nature requires relaxation from time to time. He never indulges in them to the prejudice of his neighbour, or of his health, nor when duty calls him to other occupations. His only object in these, as in all other things, is to please God ; and he refrains from them when he is conscious that the will of God requires him so to do.

Although it is the only ambition of his soul to serve and love God, he is not unmindful of the infirmities of human nature, and of the dangers, with which he is surrounded. He frequently calls to mind the declaration of the apostle, that no one stands so firm, but he has reason to fear lest he fall. (1 Cor. x.) He, consequently, humbles himself in the sight of God, and by prayer and watchfulness endeavours to

be always ready to resist temptation. He takes alarm at the first approach of the enemy. Even the smallest fault he strenuously labours to avoid, dreading lest the enemy should by degrees gain an ascendancy over him, and lead him into transgressions of a more serious nature. The very name of sin makes him tremble. He dreads it above all other evils. He dreads it more than the loss of health, or wealth, or good name, or wife, or children, or friends. He dreads it more than the loss of life itself. And he dreads it, on account of its opposition to the will of Him, who is his great Creator, whose love is dearer to him than all created things besides.—I pretend not to say that he never falls into sin. This would be too discouraging to the generality of christians. The scripture itself says that *the just man falls seven times*: (Prov. xxiv.) The most perfect are liable to be surprised. The most perfect are open to temptation, and may sometimes not be properly prepared for resistance. There is, however, an essential difference between the christian, whose faults are only venial, whose transgressions are very rare, who sins only through surprise, and who immediately returns to God by sincere repentance, and the man, who transgresses through the corruption of his own heart, who sins mortally and frequently, and whose sentiments of repentance are only for a time, without any effectual amendment. In the one, they are faults, which do not deprive the soul of

the grace of God; in the other, they are crimes, which will never be forgiven, unless they are sincerely repented of, and truly and entirely forsaken.

Thus it is, my brethren, that the true christian is renewed in the newness of life. Thus it is that the leaven, which is hid in his soul, causes the whole to be leavened. Although he still continues to feel the infirmities of human nature, its corruption is subdued: the old leaven is purged out. He lives in God and for God. His whole heart is centered in him. Earthly things he counts but as dung, provided he can but gain Christ. (Phil. iii.) Although he is obliged to seek after them by hard labour, for the purpose of providing for his support, he fixes not his affections on them. He uses them as if he used them not: and at all times, and in all occurrences, he makes them contribute to the honour of God, and to the sanctification of his soul.—Oh! how justly is the kingdom of God in the heart of such a christian likened to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened! How perfectly is he disengaged from all earthly ties! How truly has he his conversation in heaven!

My brethren, it behoveth you seriously to examine how far your character agrees with the one I have delineated. Do not deceive yourselves. The kingdom of God must necessarily be established in your souls in this world, or

you will not form a part of his kingdom in the next. Can you, therefore, flatter yourselves that the leaven of piety and religion has penetrated all the powers of your souls, and purged out the old leaven of ungodliness, and worldly desires? Can it be said with truth, that you live in Christ, and that Christ liveth in you? Does it appear evident by the general tenor of your conduct, that your soul is centered in God, that you *will* nothing but the *will of God*, and that you seek nothing but God, and your salvation, in all your employments, and in all your pursuits? Does the testimony of those, who are best acquainted with your conduct, in private as well as public, affirm that your lives are like the lives of strangers, and pilgrims in this world, journeying on without stop towards your true country, the heavenly Jerusalem? I fear that there are not many of whom this testimony will be given: and I fear that few amongst you will testify to that effect even of yourselves. The truly virtuous will not, through sentiments of humility: and the ungodly will be deterred by the stings of a guilty conscience. But, although no one will dare to give this testimony of himself, let each one examine the nature of the deficiencies, of which his conscience accuses him. Let him ascertain, whether they are essential, or not: whether they proceed from the weakness, or from the corruption of human nature?—If there be reasonable hopes that they proceed merely from

the weaknesses inseparable from mortal man, he may encourage himself by the most confident assurance, that the God, whom he wishes to serve, will never forsake him. But, if it appear but too manifest, that they arise from the corruption of human nature, they prove, beyond a doubt, that the whole soul is not leavened, and that the whole of her affections are not centered in God. Now, take notice, if only one inordinate affection possess your heart, it will be sufficient to banish God entirely from it. He is a jealous God. He will have the whole heart, or he will have none. If a single part be alienated from him, the whole will be rejected by him. And, if it be rejected by him, it necessarily becomes the property of that other master, whose only object is its destruction.

Be solicitous, therefore, and endeavour to encourage the growth of piety in your souls. If you are conscious that your lives have not been hitherto regulated according to the laws of God, begin seriously, and without delay. It is not too late. Even now the kingdom of God may be established in you. The case would not be hopeless, were you even conscious that you had hitherto frequently begun, and as often fallen away again.—If it has been, and now is, your real desire to raise the edifice of piety in your soul, and you perceive that *much hay, wood, and stubble, is mixed up in the building*, take courage, and encrease your exertions. In a word, whatever may have been your past con-

duct, and whatever may be your present state, resolve to profit of the grace of God for the time to come. Were the seeds of piety, which now exist in your souls, no larger than the grain of mustard-seed, mentioned in another parable of this day's gospel, by care and diligence they may be nourished, and brought to maturity. They may be cherished in such a manner, as to cause them to shoot their branches far and near, and at length, to fill the whole capacity of your interior.

Be, therefore, earnest in your endeavours. The kingdom of heaven is worth contending for. A crown of immortal glory, however arduous its conquest, is worth all your labour. It is like a treasure hidden in a field, and were you to sell all that you had, in order to purchase that field, it may be said that you gained it free-cost.—Exert, therefore, every power of your souls. Correct all your errors, and repent of all your past transgressions. Take off your affections from earthly things, and give your hearts to God. He, in return, will give his whole self to you. He will come, and take up his abode in you. He will establish his kingdom in your souls in this life, and he will prepare you for his kingdom in the next.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

ON THE RENOVATION OF OUR PERVOUR.

Why stand you here all the day idle ? MATT. XX. 6.

THE parable of this Sunday is intended by the Church to serve as an admonition to the faithful, that it is now time to forsake the ways of idleness and sin, and to enter seriously into the service of their Lord. The time is at hand, when the children of the promise will commence their annual course of Lent, and endeavour, by fasting and prayer, to complete the subjugation of their passions, and reduce their flesh into the subjection of the spirit. The time is at hand, when the whole universal Church, spread over all nations, and comprising in her bosom all peoples, and tribes, and tongues, will unite all her efforts, and in one body endeavour to disarm the anger of God, and avert the severe judgments, which the sins of men have deserved.

Attend, therefore, my brethren, to this admonition, *stand no longer idle in the market-place*. Obey the summons without delay, and enter into the vineyard of your Lord. You are all conscious of many sins, and many imperfections. You are all assured that you have not laboured in the vineyard in the manner that was required of you. The summons, therefore, is with propriety addressed to you all. Yes, my brethren, it is my duty, and it is your duty, to begin, now at least, in good earnest: to run henceforward, not as at an uncertainty; to fight, not as if we were beating the air: but to chastise our bodies, and reduce them into subjection, lest we become castaways from the face of the Almighty. (1 Cor. ix.)

Many times has the Lord, during the course of our lives, invited us to diligence in his service. At the third hour, the sixth, and the ninth hour, he said to us, by the voice of his ministers: *go ye into my vineyard*. It is now, perhaps, the eleventh hour, and he renews the invitation. Oh! let us no longer be deaf to his calls; for the night cometh on, in which no man can work. Let us enter seriously into his service; for our all depends upon it for eternity. A few reflections on this subject shall form the substance of this discourse.

In temporal things men are generally inquisitive: and experience daily teaches, that, in promoting worldly success, men are generally eager and solicitous. Were I a minister of the

world, as I am a minister of the gospel, and were it in my power, in consequence thereof, to point out, or provide means to you, who are here assembled, of realising an immense property, with little risk, and little labour, there is not one, who would not listen to my plans with most anxious expectation: there is not one, who would not immediately embrace the means, and congratulate himself on the happiness of possessing the opportunity of procuring such blessings for himself and family. This is human nature, and it is not to be condemned. But, from this disposition, a powerful argument may be drawn to show the inconsistency of those, who are eager to promote their interests in this world, and who are listless and indifferent as to their interests in the next.

Were it, then, in my power, to point out to you infallible means of enriching yourselves in this world, you would listen to me with eager attention, and would consider me as your greatest benefactor. Although you know that worldly possessions are uncertain, and sensual gratifications momentary;—although you know that all earthly things will be snatched out of your hands by death, and that a dreadful responsibility will be incurred by the momentary possession of them;—although you know that this family—these children of yours, for whose temporal good you are so solicitous, will, in the course of one single century, be in their graves, and their descendants, perhaps, again reduced

to a state of poverty, and these possessions, which you had acquired with so much labour, be transferred to other hands;—although you know all this, nevertheless you would listen to my plans with the most anxious attention: not a word that fell from my lips would be lost.

There is nothing, however, to be wondered at in this. There is planted in the breast of every one a solicitude for self-preservation. Of course, there is a solicitude to procure those things upon which self-preservation depends. And as the mind of man is capable of providing for future as well as present wants, this solicitude induces him to seek to lay up stores, or to acquire a superabundance, in order that these wants may be satisfied. This is according to the order of nature: and when it is not carried beyond the bounds of reason, or the laws of the gospel, it is not to be reproved.

But, at the same time, it ought to be remembered, that this world is not our permanent place of abode, that our souls are immortal, and that happiness or misery everlasting awaits us as soon as this our earthly tabernacle is dissolved. It ought to be remembered, that, by the light of faith, we know that happiness everlasting is to be acquired, and misery everlasting to be avoided, by our own exertions, during the time that we are in this body. Consequently it ought to be remembered, that the solicitude for self-preservation in another world ought to occupy that place in our mind which

its magnitude and importance requires. Had we been made for this world alone, the Almighty would have formed us after such a manner as to have been able to find rest and contentment in the enjoyment of earthly things :—he would have put us on a level, at least, with the other animals of the creation. But, my brethren, this is not the case. However great a share we may obtain of the things of this world, happiness is not to be found in the enjoyment of it. There is always a something in the mind that causes perplexity and uneasiness. Remorse for the past, and anxiety for the future, always intrudes itself, and prevents our enjoyment, sometimes even of the present moment.

If, then, true happiness is not to be found here, however extensive our possessions may be, is it not right, is it not rational, is it not a duty which we owe to ourselves, that we should feel a greater solicitude for that happiness, which will never fade, which will never fall away, than for that which is merely a shadow of happiness, and which, like a shadow, is merely momentary ? And if my ministry would be respected, and my words caught up with avidity, were it in my power to point out to you certain means of obtaining this shadow of happiness, by putting you in the way of acquiring large possessions, ought not my ministry to be more respected, and my words more eagerly attended to, when it is known that I am impowered to point out to you means of obtaining eternal hap-

piness? and not only eternal happiness, but happiness in this world—the most perfect happiness that can be enjoyed on this side the grave,—*the approving testimony of a good conscience?* Nevertheless, this is my ministry,—a ministry, empowering me to point out to you certain means of obtaining possession of every thing that is desirable—every thing that is permanent—every thing that can contribute to your temporal and eternal welfare.—And with what attention is it that you listen to my words? With what avidity is it that you embrace the means described?

I speak not of myself, as if I possessed superior wisdom, or was enlightened above others of my state: but I speak of myself as a minister of the gospel, whose office it is, in virtue of the commission received from the successors of the Apostles, to preach to you the words of life, the doctrines of salvation.—In consideration of the character, therefore, which I bear, I say: what attention do you pay to my words? and what endeavours do you make to follow what I recommend? You are well assured that I speak to you nothing of my own. Your faith tells you, that the means which I prescribe for obtaining permanent happiness, are means certain and infallible,—means, pointed out by Truth itself in the gospel. And what attention is it that you pay to them? Can you say from your hearts, that you feel a greater solicitude to profit by this knowledge, which is imparted to

you, than you would, were my instructions merely concerning the means of obtaining possession of the mammon of this world? And if you cannot give this testimony of yourselves, may it not with justice be said, that you are more solicitous for this world than for the next,—that your hearts are centered more in perishable than in eternal things,—that you seek your consolation here, more than your happiness hereafter—that you love this world more than God—that you are deficient in an essential point of christian piety—and that you are not in the way which leads to the possession of that which ought to be the only object of your ambition?

Oh? my brethren, let not this world any longer engross your affections. Fix your eyes on that crown of inconceivable and immortal glory, which is set before you; and suffer not momentary pleasures, or perishable possessions, to turn you away from it. Stand not all the day idle in the market-place of the world. Your Lord invites you into the vineyard. Enter into it with the determined resolution of labouring in earnest in the service of your master.—What is the world, and all that it contains, when compared with your souls? What will all the emoluments, the riches, the pleasures, the honours of this world, avail you hereafter, if your souls are eternally separated from God, and consigned to the horrors of never-ending torments? Is time worthy to be compared with

eternity! Are momentary gratifications worthy to be compared with infinite and eternal happiness? Is earth worthy to be compared with heaven?—Oh! be not of the number of those, of whom it is said by the spirit of God, that they are *wiser in their generation than the children of light*. (Luke xvi.) Be not of the number of those, who are more ingenious, and more persevering in contriving for their temporal support, than for their eternal welfare.

The evils of this life admit of many comforts. Poverty may be endured, and endured with cheerfulness, when we are submissive to the will of God. Sufferings of body may be endured, and consolation derived from them, when we reflect that they are our due, and that God sends them for our greater good. All the evils of life may be endured with patience and resignation, provided we are disposed to make all things contribute to our eternal welfare.—But the loss of our souls is an evil, which cannot be repaired. It is an evil far surpassing all other evils put together. It is an evil which admits not of the least glimpse of consolation or hope. —Where is now the *rich man*, of whom our Lord spoke in the gospel? What do all his pleasures and riches profit him now? His soul is lost. He is burning, and will continue to burn for ever in the flames of the bottomless abyss: and it is in vain that he craves for a single drop of water to cool his tongue. There are others of your fellow-creatures, by thou-

sands and tens of thousands in the same unhappy condition. There, in those regions of darkness, where no order but everlasting horror dwelleth, they unceasingly exclaim: *What hath pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All those things have passed away like a shadow.* (Wisd. v.)—Truly, my brethren, the loss of your souls, is the loss of every thing that is valuable. It is a loss which you cannot dread too much. It is a loss which you cannot be too eager to avert.

Frequently ask yourselves these questions: “For what end was I made? Why was I sent into this world? Was it to amass riches? Was it to run after sensual delights? Was it to exalt myself by pride above my fellow-creatures? Was it to lift up my hand against my Maker, and to seek pleasure in the very act of rebellion against him? No: it was to save my soul: it was that I might prepare myself for the enjoyment of God in the next world, by faithfully serving him during the few years of my sojourning here.” Reason in this manner with yourselves, particularly on those occasions, when the cares and solitudes of this world are urging you to neglect the service of God, and to give your whole attention to temporal things. —If, like St. Paul, in the midst of the vicissitudes of this uncertain world, you were to forget the things that are behind, and to stretch forward to those that are before:—were you frequently to figure to yourselves in imagina-

tion, the state in which your souls will be a thousand years hence, and to form a conception of the ideas, which you will then entertain, oh! with what contempt would you look down on all terrestrial things! Do now what you will then wish to have done. Serve God, as you will then wish to have served him. Repent of your sins as sincerely as you will then wish to have repented. Comply as faithfully with your duties, as you will then wish to have done: and all will be well with you.

This world, my brethren, was made for you, and not you for the world. It was intended merely as a place of pilgrimage—a desert, through which you were to travel to the land of promise—the heavenly Jerusalem. It was intended as a place of trial, where you were to prove your fidelity to your Almighty Creator, and gain a title to a reward. You were not, therefore, made for the earth. You were made for a more excellent place of residence,—for infinite and eternal happiness in the bosom of the Divinity itself.—Think of this, my brethren, and entertain such sentiments of the world, and of worldly things, as they deserve. Do not value them at a higher rate than they are worth: for this would be deceiving yourselves to your future sorrow and loss. Look upon Jesus as *the author and finisher of your hope*. Be convinced that the enjoyment of his love and friendship, is preferable to every other enjoyment: and that the possession of him

is more to be prized than all other things. *What things were gain to me, says St. Paul, those I have counted loss for Christ. I count all things to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but as dung, that I may gain Christ. (Phil. iii.)* This is truly, my brethren, the only business of importance worthy of your attention. If you have hitherto neglected it; if you have been *standing idle in the market-place*, now, at least, accept the invitation of your Lord, enter into his vineyard, and labour with all earnestness to bring forth fruit in due season. Divide not your services between God and the world. Give all to him, to whom all is due. Make his honour and glory the object of all your actions, and of all your desires. Place heaven before your eyes at all times, and in all places. *Run not as at an uncertainty*; but be resolved to *make your calling and election sure*, by the practice of all christian duties. *Fight not, as if beating the air*; but resist all your spiritual enemies with manfulness: resist all the allurements of the world, and all the concupiscences of the flesh, with a firm confidence in the grace of God, and a determined resolution to sacrifice your all in this world, rather than expose your souls to the danger of being eternally lost.

Now, my brethren, is the acceptable time. The whole Church of God is about to commence her annual course of penance. There

are many probably amongst you, of whom it may be said, that it is now the eleventh hour, and that the night is coming on, in which no man can work. Who these may be, it is impossible for any mortal being to ascertain. The length of life does not depend on the number of years. The young as well as the old, the healthy as well as the infirm, are all within the reach of the scythe of death, and are all liable to be cut down at a moment's notice.—Enter, therefore, into the vineyard of the Lord without delay. Wait not till your last hour is come, and the fatal summons arrive. Begin, and begin seriously: and then, were the summons to appear before your Lord, to come even at a moment's notice, you will be found worthy to receive a reward equal to that which will be received by those, who have borne the burthen of the day and of the heats. But do not delay. Devote the remainder of your time, whether long or short, to the love and service of God; and you may rest assured that, if you persevere to the end, he who is ever faithful to his promises, will be ready to receive you into his everlasting dwelling.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

ON HEARING THE WORD OF GOD.

The seed is the word of God. LUKE viii. 11.

THE parable of this day is explained by our Lord himself in a manner intelligible to the weakest capacity. The seed is the word of God—that word, which you are on this day assembled to hear. The soil, on which this seed is cast, is your souls: and the encrease, which it ought to produce, is not less than an hundred fold. If this encrease be not produced, the reason is either because the seed fell by the way side, and is trodden under foot; or because it fell upon a rock, and was soon choked up by thorns and briars.—Or, in other words, if the word of God do not fructify in a due manner in the souls of those who hear it, the reason is, not that the seed is not good, but because there is a want of proper disposition in the hearers. In some it produces no

more fruit than seed which is sown on the highway: and these are they, who have little or no sentiment of piety: who come to hear the word of God more through custom or curiosity, than with the desire of profiting by it: and who, if an impression be made on their minds by the zealous exhortations of their pastor, the effect is only momentary:—*they believe only for a time.* In others, the effect is of longer duration, but ceases before it comes to maturity. And these are they, who come to hear the word of God with desires of profiting by it; who listen with attention; who seek for instruction, and who gain a knowledge of the duties which the gospel requires of them. In these the seed begins to grow up: but, unfortunately, they suffer themselves to be overpowered by the cares and solitudes of the world. During the greater part of the week, instead of devoting a space of time to meditation and serious consideration on the truths that they have heard, their thoughts are wholly absorpt by their domestic concerns, their business, or their pleasures, and long before the next Sunday arrives, the effects produced by the preceding instructions are totally effaced.—Others there are, but unfortunately the number is very small, who come to hear the word of God, not only with desires, but with resolutions of profiting by it. These are they, who, with the royal prophet, meditate on his law day and night, who apply in real earnest to the sanctification of their souls, and who

persevere in their labours, until they have attained the summit of christian perfection. This is the good soil described in this day's gospel. These are the dispositions, which you all ought to possess. A few reflections on this subject cannot be otherwise than profitable to you.

The word of God is a treasure of inestimable value. It was purchased for you by the labours and ministry of the Son of God: and it is the guide which is to direct you in the way of happiness. To be deprived of this treasure is a great evil, and it was one of the most dreadful judgments that he formerly inflicted on his chosen people under the old law. To possess this treasure unpolluted, and undiminished, is one of the greatest consolations and blessings, that the servant of God can enjoy.—This *word* is no other than the truths, which the Supreme Being has revealed to man, on the knowledge and fulfilment of which his salvation depends. The full knowledge of them all was imparted by our Saviour to the apostles, with a positive injunction that they should go and teach all nations. They were appointed the guardians and teachers of his law, and from them there was to be no appeal. In obedience to this command, these heavenly inspired men preached and taught. They instructed the world both by writing and by word of mouth. To perpetuate the great work, they appointed and ordained others to succeed them, giving them the same injunction, which they themselves had received,

namely, that they should preach and teach, and hand down to future ages the truths which had been entrusted to them. A regular succession of teachers and interpreters of the law has continued through every age, and by their means the word of God and the truths of salvation have descended to us. You enjoy the blessing of having one of these successors to administer to you the word of life. The instructions which he delivers to you, both as to articles of faith and duties of morality, are the same all-saving doctrines, which were delivered by the apostles to their immediate successors. They may be traced through every age, and in every nation where Christianity has prevailed. They are doctrines which have led innumerable saints to heaven: and they are doctrines, which will lead you to the same place of happiness, if you follow them as the saints did. They are doctrines, which have removed the ignorance of the unwise, administered comfort to the afflicted, repressed the rashness of the presumptuous, and dispelled the horrors of despair. They are doctrines, which have resolved the doubts of the timid, converted the most obstinate sinners, and advanced the just to the highest pinnacle of perfection. They are doctrines, which, although they were a stumbling-block to the Jew, and a scandal to the Gentile, have excited the admiration of the most learned, and surpass all the exalted and sublime morality of the most eminent philosophers. They are doctrines, in

a word, which, notwithstanding their sublimity, may be acquired by the illiterate as well as by the learned, by the uncivilized Indian, as well as by the enlightened European. They are adapted to the practice of all: to make the paths of life sweet to the poor and afflicted, as well as to the opulent and easy: to check the vices of the great, as well as of the little; and to direct into the paths of life the king, as well as the meanest subject.

These are the doctrines which are delivered to you, and they are well worthy your most serious consideration. They are doctrines, which you cannot acquire of yourselves: for, as St. Paul says, the word of God comes by hearing. (Rom. x.) They are doctrines which you must receive from your pastors. This you know, and therefore you reverence their ministry. You look up to them as the shepherds and feeders of your souls. You exclaim, with the apostle and the royal prophet: *How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, of them that bring glad tidings of good things.* (Rom. x.) Although you may occasionally discover in them the symptoms of human infirmity, inseparable from our frail nature, you know that the veracity of the word of God is not diminished thereby. Yes, my brethren, you are well assured that no one attains the perfection of angels, as long as they remain in this mortal state; and therefore, although the minister of the word may not

always possess that spirit of mildness, that perfect serenity of mind in the midst of provocations, that perfect uniformity of temper, that constant guard over the tongue, that perfect art of making himself all to all so as to gain all, in a word, that perfection in all virtues, which becomes the sanctity of his state, you are well assured that the word of life, which he delivers to you, is pure and undefiled; that it is the living and effectual word, more piercing than a two-edged sword, and reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints also, and the marrow. (Heb. iv.) Although, likewise, he may not possess the most shining talents, although he may not be able to please the ear with lengthened periods, and finished specimens of oratory; although he may not be master of that graceful delivery, and insinuating deportment, which are witnessed in perfect orators, you are assured that the words, which he delivers to you, are still the words of truth and life, and are equally entitled to your attention. The great St. Paul, as he himself testifies, came not in loftiness of speech or wisdom. He judged himself not to know any thing, but Jesus Christ and him crucified. He was in the midst of his converts in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling: and his speech and his preaching was, not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in showing of the spirit and the power: that faith might not stand on the wisdom of man, but on the power

of God. (1 Cor. ii.) If the minister, from whom you receive the word of God, possess no other quality than what St. Paul, in his humility, ascribes to himself, if he be among you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling, if he know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified; that is to say, if he be a faithful and regular minister of Christ—a man of prayer, and of zeal for the honour of his Master, his words, although there may be nothing of human eloquence in them, are as much the words of God, and as much, if not more calculated to be profitable to you than the harangues of the most distinguished orators.

It is not with you, as it is with those who are separated from the Catholic Church. Their ministers have no fixed rule either of faith or morality for their guidance. They do not walk in the footsteps of those great and good men, who preached to others those things only which had been handed down to them, and which were committed as a sacred deposit to their care. They have only the scriptures before them—the scriptures, which, as St. Peter admonishes us, are hard to be understood, and may easily be wrested from their true meaning to the perdition, perhaps, both of the false interpreters, and their deluded hearers. They have the scriptures only before them, and the just interpretation of them depends on their own individual learning and abilities alone. For them, therefore, it is of the utmost impor-

tance that they should place themselves under the guidance of the most learned, the most studious preachers. An ignorant man in their pulpits would be sure to lead them astray. Piety in one of their ministers is not of such consequence as extensive reading; and zeal and virtue are not of such necessity as shining abilities.—But with you, my brethren, it is very different. Your pastors are not left to the guidance of their own wisdom. The same words of life are delivered to you by the imperfect, as well as by the perfect orator. The same mysteries of faith, and the same rules of morality, are preached to you by the Priest of small abilities, as by the Priest of the most shining talents. There is no variation in the essential points of doctrine, in the sermons of any of them. One may be more elegant in his expressions, another more pleasing in his delivery, another more energetic in his arguments: but in the essential points of doctrine there is no variation between them. They all walk in the same paths, which were trodden by the great and virtuous pastors in every age. They have the scriptures before them: but these scriptures they interpret to you, not according to human wisdom, but according to the interpretations which have been given by the most learned and pious fathers, and which accord with the acknowledged belief of all Christendom. The only difference between one Catholic preacher and another consists, not in the doc-

trines they preach, but in their piety and zeal. You are safe, as to doctrine, under the guidance of any of them; and your choice of one in preference to another, ought not *necessarily* to be influenced by eloquence and learning; but, if any influence at all be suffered to prevail, it ought to be true piety, and sincere zeal.

These, my brethren, are the sources from which the words of life are derived. You apply to these sources. You attend at the house of God, and listen to the instructions of your pastor. You open your souls to receive the heavenly seed, which he is commissioned to sow. So far you comply with an essential duty. It only remains that the seed spring up, and produce fruit. This, indeed, is the most important part of the obligation, and it behoves you to examine how far you comply with it. They who attend merely through curiosity, or for the purpose of pleasing their ears with the beauties of eloquence, or the charms of delivery, think but little of regulating their lives according to the instructions they have heard; and accordingly, as our Saviour says, the seed is devoured by the birds. They, who attend through principle of duty, but who suffer the cares and solitudes of the world to engross their thoughts, and to occupy their attention, reflect upon what they hear for a short time only. The thorns and briars of their misplaced affections choke the heavenly seed, and cause it to wither away for want of moisture,

Be not, my brethren, of the number of these unhappy Christians. For what will it profit you to be hearers, if you be not likewise doers of the word? Examine, rather, the conduct of the true Christian, and be resolved to follow it. He prepares himself for hearing the word of God by prayer. He endeavours to excite in himself a sincere sorrow for the many times that he has transgressed against his holy word, and is resolved henceforward to profit by it with all earnestness and perseverance. He humbly begs of the Almighty to enlighten his understanding, that he may be enabled to comprehend the whole of the sacred truths, that are about to be delivered to him ; so far, at least, as relates to the regulation of his moral and spiritual conduct. This is his preparation.—He listens, with the strictest attention, to every word and sentence, as if an angel from heaven was conversing with him on the most important concerns of his eternal welfare. He listens, as if he alone was present, and as if the whole of the discourse was directed to him alone. If the nature and merit of any particular virtue be explained and recommended, he looks into himself, and examines whether he has hitherto practised this virtue in due manner. If he discover a deficiency, he immediately forms a resolution to reflect more maturely upon it, and devises means of supplying what was wanting. If the nature and deformity of any particular vice be pointed out, he follows the same plan,

and makes the most determined resolutions to banish from his heart every shadow of that sin, and to strengthen himself in the practice of the opposite virtue. If any particular duty, which a Christian owes either to God or his neighbour, or himself, be the subject of the discourse, he listens attentively, compares his conduct with the rule which is given, and resolves to amend whatever has been amiss. After the most minute attention, if he finds nothing in his conduct that is reprehensible, he does not take pride in himself : he gives all the glory to God, to whom alone it is due. He expresses his humble gratitude for the protecting grace, which he has received, and fervently solicits a continuation of the same blessing during the remaining time of his mortal pilgrimage. After the conclusion of the discourse, he bows down in acts of praise and thanksgiving to God for the food of his holy word : and as soon as time will allow, he makes his reflections upon it, and devises means of putting his resolutions in practice.—Thus it is that the true Christian puts to profit the word of God. Thus it is that he receives, and cherishes the seed that is planted in his soul. The effects are soon visible. The seeds shoot forth, come to maturity, and produce fruit a hundred fold.

Is it in this manner, my brethren, that you receive the seed of God's word? Alas! how many are there, who profit nothing by the most pious, the most eloquent discourses! How

many are there, who listen to the most earnest exhortations to virtues, which they do not practise, and never think of forming resolutions to correct themselves ! who hear the judgments of God denounced against vices, to which they are habituated, and never pass sentence upon themselves, nor form the shadow of a resolution to forsake them for the time to come !——How many are there, again, who, instead of applying to themselves the remarks, which are justly applicable to them, are expert and eager in applying them to others, to whom, perhaps, they are less applicable ! who see the mote in their brother's eye, and see not the beam that is in their own ! Of these it may be said, that, so far from profiting by the word of God, they turn it to their condemnation, by making it the occasion of rash judgment, detraction, and calumny !——How many are there, likewise, of a more volatile kind, who go to a sermon as to an entertainment : whose only remarks are on the merits or defects of the preacher ! who, like people returning from the theatre, applaud themselves for the treat they have enjoyed, or murmur at the disappointment they have experienced !

You, my brethren, I hope, are not to be reckoned in the number of any of these. An eminent father and doctor of the church, St. Gregory, (Hom. 15. in Evang.) remarks, that the word of God is the food of the soul : that if this word be not carefully stored up in the me-

mory, it is as if corporal food could not be retained on the stomach, on account of weakness. And if the stomach be too weak to retain food, is it not a sign, he says, that the life of that person is in danger? These words we may apply to those whom I have above described. The life of their souls is in imminent danger. They choke the seed of God. Their hearts are too much engaged in the cares, and riches, and pleasures of the world, to think of the more serious things of God and eternity. They are more solicitous for temporal pleasures, than for eternal joys. They abuse one of the greatest blessings of God, and deliberately refuse to accept the hand that is stretched out to them, for the purpose of upholding them in their course, and leading them to the gates of life immortal.

Do you, my brethren, be more wise. Think while you have time. The blessing will be offered to you again. The seed of God's word will be once more sowed in your soul. Cherish it for the time to come. Cherish it in the manner that the true Christian cherishes it. It will then spring up, and if you persevere in your pious resolutions, it will come to maturity, and it will produce fruit a hundred-fold,—fruit, on which you will live for ever in the kingdom of never-ending glory.

QUINQUAGESIMA.

ON THE FAST OF LENT.

Be converted to me with all your heart, in fasting, in weeping, and in mourning... JOEL ii. 12. EPIST. FOR ASH-WED.

WE are approaching, my brethren, the solemn time, when we are annually called upon by the church to *be converted to the Lord with all our hearts, in fasting, in weeping, and in mourning*. The words of my text were addressed to the Jews by the prophet Joel, many centuries before the coming of the Messiah: and they are addressed to you at this time, for the same purpose as they were addressed to them; namely, to induce you to enter upon a rigorous course of penance, in order to satisfy the justice of God, injured by your crimes, and to avert the judgments, which there is too much reason to believe are hanging over your heads on account of them.

Fasting is painful to flesh and blood. It is

repugnant to the feelings of the sensual man. It is a severe denial of the will. On these accounts, it has always been declared by the holy men, who were inspired by the Spirit of God, and by the Spirit of God himself, to be an essential ingredient of true repentance. The Fast of Lent, in particular, has been handed down to us, from the apostolical times, as an observance, which is binding on every one who pretends to the name of Christian.

In these latter times, restless spirits have risen up, and pretended to point out an easier way to heaven than the way of self-denial and penance. And even in our own communion, there have not been wanting those, who, on the score that fasting was prejudicial to health, have declared their conviction that it would be right to abolish the observance altogether. There are arguments brought forward by one and the other, the sole object of which is, to remove every restraint, which the laws of God have placed over the inclinations of corrupt nature. In this discourse, I will prove to you the constant practice and the necessity of fasting, particularly of observing this holy time of Lent.

Lent is a fast of forty days, instituted for the purpose of commemorating the fast of our Lord in the desert, and of performing an annual course of penance for our sins. It is not a new ordinance. It is as ancient as the Christian Religion itself. The apostles themselves ob-

served this fast ; and their immediate successors imposed the observance of it as an obligation on all Christians. The most ancient ecclesiastical writers, even they who lived within one hundred years after the apostles, speak of it in the plainest terms, and even describe the kind of food that was allowed to be taken. In every age, and in every nation, where Christianity has been preached and followed, it has been observed from the time of the apostles down to the present time. Even the first authors of what is called the reformation, notwithstanding their desire, and their interest to make religion as agreeable as possible to flesh and blood, continued to preach up the obligation of observing it. The Church of England to this day, notwithstanding the general neglect of it by her followers, expressly commands it to be observed ; both in her book of *Common Prayers*, and in the book of *Homilies*, or Sermons, which was published for the use of the clergy by Queen Elizabeth and the Parliament.—It was not till within the last century that men have become so enlightened, or rather so adverse to the spirit of Christianity, as to imagine that fasting was superstition, that self-denial was of no avail, and that to reign with Christ it was not required to suffer with him.

If we examine into the origin of the command of fasting, we shall find that it is as ancient as the creation. The first and only command imposed on our first parents, was to fast,

or abstain from the fruit of a certain tree. Immediately after the deluge, the injunction of fasting from blood, and things strangled, was imposed on Noah and his posterity. The history of the Jewish people is a continued account of the observance of fasting. The prophets exhort to fasting in almost every page of their inspired writings. Jonah was commanded by God himself to preach penance to the Ninevites, and the penance, which disarmed his wrath, was turning from their evil ways, and fasting. Judith humbled her soul in fasting. Tobias extolled the merits of fasting, and practised it. David declared that his knees were weakened with fasting. Moses and Elias fasted. Daniel solicited as a favour, that he might be allowed to confine his food to pulse and water. The history of the just, in the Old Testament, is the history of fasting. They all fasted. They all exhorted the people to fast, and to *do penance in fasting, in weeping, and in mourning*, as expressed by the prophet Joel, in the words of my text.

Our Lord himself, before he commenced his mission, entered on a severe fast of forty days in the wilderness, wholly secluded from the society of men. He extolled the austere life of his precursor, the Baptist, whose only food was locusts and wild honey. And, although no severe fasts are recorded as being practised by his disciples, during his abode with them, he declared that they should fast, after the

bridegroom was taken from them. He did more. He described the spirit with which they were to fast, and declared that a reward should be given to them : *When you fast, anoint your head, and comb your hair, that you may not appear to men to fast : and your heavenly Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward you.* (Matt. vi.)

The apostles were faithful to the commands of their Master. They fasted, as is related in the 13th chap. of the Acts of the Apostles. The austerities of St. Paul in fasting, are too minutely described in his epistles to require illustration. The first disciples of the faith walked in the same footsteps. They fasted. They had regular days set aside for fasting. Wednesdays and Fridays were called the stations, and were observed as fasting days throughout the year. The great annual fast of Lent was observed by all. St. Ireneus, the most ancient of christian writers, and a disciple of the apostles, speaks of Lent as a regular observance among Christians. In the *Apostolical Canons* (so called because they contain the ordinances and observances of the Church in the apostolic age, and which were written soon after the times of the apostles) it was decreed that, " If any bishop, priest, deacon, reader, or preceptor, do not fast the forty days of the Passover, or the weekly stations of Wednesdays and Fridays, unless by bodily weakness he be not able, he shall be deposed : and that, if he be a layman, he shall be excommunicated."—St.

Jérôme, one of the greatest ornaments of the Church, says: "We fast one Lent by apostolical tradition, the whole world agreeing with us herein."

In succeeding ages, the writers became more numerous, and more particular descriptions were given of this great fast. St. Basil, the great ornament of the Eastern Church, says: "There is no island, no continent, no city, no nation, no corner of the earth ever so remote, in which this fast is not proclaimed. Armies, travellers, sailors, merchants, though far from home, every where hear the solemn promulgation, and receive it with joy. Let no one exclude himself from the number of those that fast, in which all men of every age, of whatever rank and dignity, are comprised. Angels draw up the list of those who fast: take care that your angel put down your name: desert not the standard of your religion."—"Now kings and princes," says St. Bernard, a later writer, "clergy and laity, the nobility and the common people, the rich and the poor, will all fast as one man. Is it not base that a fast, which the whole Church bears with us, should seem burdensome?"

These, my brethren, and many other testimonies, which might be brought from writers in every age, if the brevity of a discourse would permit, prove the constant practice and the utility of fasting.—How different is this discipline, and how much more consonant is it

with the spirit of the gospel, than what is preached up by the would-be doctors and prophets of these times! In the one we see a spirit of self-denial and penance: in the other, a spirit of sensuality, and self-love. In the one we see an attachment to the interests of the inward man: in the other, the interests of both inward and outward man are considered inseparable. In the one we behold a readiness to renounce what is earthly, in order more securely to obtain what is heavenly: in the other, the love of earthly things is retained, and declared to be no hindrance to the acquisition of what is purely spiritual, or heavenly. In the one we see a renunciation of present ease and enjoyment, in order to have their conversation in heaven: in the other, we behold an incongruous union of spiritual and temporal, of earthly and heavenly, of the enjoyments of the soul, and the gratifications of the body, of the works of God, and the works of Mammon.—This, my brethren, is not according to the doctrines of the gospel.

It is true, that fasting, of itself, unaccompanied with the spirit of repentance, will avail us nothing; for it is not that, which goeth into the mouth, that defileth a man. So likewise it is true, that a Christian cannot make a god of his belly, and say, with the impious man: let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die: and yet be a follower of the crucified Jesus. There must be a distinction made between the treat-

ment of the inward and the outward man. If the outward man, or the flesh be pampered, its passions will encrease, and the powers of the inward man, or spirit, will decrease in proportion. If we place our delight in the good things of this world, our love and desire of the good things of eternity will be proportionably weakened. We cannot favour both body and soul at the same time. Their interests, and their tastes are so opposed to each other, that we must necessarily either hate the one, and love the other; or hold to the one, and despise the other. *We cannot serve both God and Mammon.* (Matt. vi.) *They that live according to the flesh,* says St. Paul, *mind the things that are of the flesh: but they that are according to the spirit, mind the things that are of the spirit. For the wisdom of the flesh is death: but the wisdom of the spirit is life and peace. Because the wisdom of the flesh is an enemy of God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither can it be. And they that are of the flesh cannot please God. . . . For, if you live according to the flesh, you shall die: but if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live.* (Rom. viii.)

Yes, my brethren, fasting, and fasting from certain foods both in quality and quantity, has always been considered by the servants of God, as a necessary ingredient of true repentance, an effectual means of crucifying the flesh and reducing it into subjection to the spirit, and an available act of atonement to the injured justice

of God, when sanctified by faith and the merits of Christ. When *Jonas* preached to the Ninevites, *yet forty days and Nineve shall be destroyed*; the anger of God was appeased by fasting. The people proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth from the greatest of them, even to the least. . . . And the King decreed: let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed nor drink water: but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil, and from the violence that is in their hands. . . . And the Lord repented of the evil, that he had said he would do unto them, and he did it not. (*Jonas* iii.)

In the same spirit, and for the same purposes, the primitive Christians observed the days of fasting, and particularly the forty days of Lent, with a rigour, which appears almost incredible to the tepid or sensual Christians of these times. They never broke their fast till after sun-set: and their repast, even then, consisted only of herbs, roots, and bread. They abstained, not only from flesh-meat, but from fish, and from those things which came from flesh, namely, eggs, butter, cheese, and milk. They fasted even from wine and fermented liquor of every kind, and confined their drink to water. It was not till the sixth century that a little wine was allowed to dilute the water, in favour of weak stomachs. "We are taught by the example of Daniel," said Theophilus,

Patriarch of Alexandria, in the 5th age, "to refrain on fasting days from flesh-meat and wine, to live on pulse, and to drink only water."——It was not till the tenth century, that, in England and France, food made of milk was allowed, and then only by particular dispensation. It was a general custom never to have any thing nicely dressed, or with much preparation. What was eaten, was always so common, and so cheap, as to cause a great saving in the expenses of the table; all of which was generally devoted to works of alms-deeds. Some allowed themselves no food that had been dressed with fire. St. Jerome condemned the practice of those who brought dainty fruits to their table. "What advantage," he says, "do you expect to receive by refraining from the use of oil, if, at the same time, you seek scarce and delicate fruits. . . . bread made of fine flour. . . . The garden is ransacked to furnish dainties to the palate—an indulgence, which easily leads us astray from the path to heaven. Plain usual bread ought to content him who fasts."

Dispensations as to the rigour of the fast, were not granted without absolute necessity. St. Chrysostome, Archbishop of Constantino-ple, in the fifth century, observing that some of his flock, who found themselves too weak, after the ninth or tenth day, to keep the fast in its rigour, took their repast before the hour of sermon in the afternoon, says: "Let him give larger alms: let him offer up more fervent

prayers : let him be more forward, and show greater alacrity in hearing the word of God. In these things his bodily infirmity can be no hindrance to him. Let him be reconciled to his enemies, drive all remembrance of injuries from his heart, and the like, and he hath kept the true fast which the Lord requires : for he commands us to abstain from food for the sake of these things, and that we should check the wantonness of the flesh, and make it obedient and tractable to fulfil his commands. Wherefore, I beseech you, who can fast, that you encrease, and make more fervent this, your pious forwardness. For the more the outward man (or the flesh) is weakened, the more your inward man is renewed and strengthened. Fasting subjects the body, and bridles its disorderly inclinations. It also makes the soul clear and bright: it gives her wings; and makes her light, and ready to soar aloft."

The first time that flesh-meat was allowed in Lent, was in the sixth century, on account of a very unusual scarcity of vegetables, and other lenten food. And yet, so repugnant was this indulgence to the feelings of the faithful, that hardly any one made use of it.—In succeeding ages, such dispensations were very rare, and never given by any other than by the head of the Church himself, and for the most pressing necessity. A particular dispensation was, likewise, required for the use of eggs and cheese, till within these few centuries: and it

was not till within the last century that general dispensations were granted for flesh-meat.

To be dispensed with the fast, as it now stands, very great and urgent reasons are required. Every slight disorder, or corporal uneasiness, or little pain, is not a just reason. In such cases as these, fasting is often very beneficial. At least, mortification being the very object of fasting, such inconveniences as these ought to be endured. Little head-achs, pains in the stomach, or such like complaints, frequently arise either from too long a disuse of fasting, from change in the manner of living, from intemperance, or repletion : and in such cases, fasting is wholesome. In the eastern or Greek Church, no meat is allowed in Lent even to this day, not even to those who are at the point of death.

In this manner, my brethren, has the fast of Lent been considered as obligatory on all Christians from the earliest times. The nearer we approach the apostolical age, the more austere was the fast, and the more strictly was it observed. Relaxations gained ground by slow degrees, and in proportion only as the fervour of the faithful diminished. During the long space of eighteen hundred years, these relaxations have encreased to such a degree, as to have destroyed almost every vestige of the primitive austerities. Were our forefathers to rise again, and to learn how few privations are required in these times ; were they, moreover, to discover

that the greater number of Christians dispensed themselves, or sought to be dispensed with the little that remains, they would almost be induced to believe that piety and fervour was not to be found on the earth.

Do you, my brethren, endeavour at this time to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. I have described the rigours of fasting in former times, not for the purpose of disheartening you, but to encourage you to endure with patience the few privations to which you will be subjected at this time.—Let those, who can fast, adhere strictly to the regulations which are given, and not exceed in the least.—Let those, whose health would be injured by a strict observance, seek a dispensation from their pastor in regular form; and then let them observe as much of the fast as they can. Let them make a more frugal meal; eat more simple food, without savoury sauces. Let them deny themselves conveniences, refrain from superfluities, and content themselves with what is barely necessary. The liberty, which many of those who cannot fast, take of living without restraint, and denying themselves in nothing, is entirely contrary to the spirit of the Church and her laws.—Let those, who are in sickness, or whose poverty and hard labour render their whole lives a perpetual Lent, endeavour to sanctify their pains by perfect resignation, and a sincere penitential spirit. Let them add voluntary self-denials according to their circum-

stances ; and they will not fail to receive bountifully from God in proportion to their goodwill.——Let us all, with one accord, endeavour to sanctify the little that we are able to endure, by fervent prayer, alms-deeds, and by turning away from the wickedness that is in our hands, and we shall make ourselves acceptable to God, and be prepared for an eternal union with him, in the bosom of our crucified Jesus.

ASH WEDNESDAY.

Remember man that thou art dust, and into dust thou shalt return. GEN. iii. 13.

ON this day, my brethren, we enter on the solemn fast of Lent: and in order to induce us to begin this penitential course with fervour, the Church reminds us of our common origin, and of the state that awaits us ere long, in the words of the Almighty to our first parents—*dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return.*

This day has always been observed by the Church with great solemnity and devotion. It takes its name from the ceremony of putting ashes on the foreheads of the faithful—a ceremony, very expressive in its meaning, and which has been observed from the highest antiquity.—In the Old Law the patriarchs, and prophets, and just men, put ashes on their heads, as a testimony of grief, and as an act of humiliation in the sight of God. In the Eastern countries, it was a general custom, even in temporal calamities, to express grief or

Indignation by rending the garments, putting on sackcloth, laying on the ground, strewing ashes or dust on the forehead, fasting from food, and the like. The friends of Job, when they witnessed the afflictions of him, whom they loved, lifted up their voice and wept, and rent every man his garment, and sprinkled dust on their heads, and sat down with him on the ground in silence. (Job xi.)

This humiliating ceremony was particularly observed as a testimony of repentance, and sorrow for sin. Job, when he was reprehended by the Almighty, humbled himself in this manner : *I reprehend myself*, he said, *and do penance in dust and ashes*. (Job. xlii.) Josue, and the ancients of Israel, endeavouring to appease the Lord, who was incensed at the sacrilegious robbery of Achan, did penance, casting dust upon their heads. (Josue vii.) The prophets frequently exhorted the Jews to do penance, and to do penance in sackcloth and ashes. Our Lord himself describes it as an emblem of repentance, when he says that, if he had wrought the same miracles in Tyre and Sidon, as he had in the cities of Corozain and Bethsaida, they would have done penance in sackcloth and ashes. (Luke x.)

On account of this ceremony having been observed and recommended by the faithful in the old law, and in some degree sanctioned by our Lord himself, the Church has continued to observe it from the earliest ages. Being adopt-

ed as the Spouse of Christ, and it being declared that she should be without spot or wrinkle, (Eph. v.), she has always laboured to eradicate every stain that could sully her purity. She subjected her unhappy children, who had publicly transgressed, to public penance, and ordered them to be clothed in sackcloth and ashes. Even Emperors she has excluded from the Church, and obliged them either to take their station with the penitents, or to live without the benefit of the sacraments. — These public penances she always proportioned to the enormity of the crime: for some it was for twenty years or longer, for others ten, for others one, for others six months, and for others a less time. Private sinners she likewise subjected to the same public penance, when it could be done without scandal, or injury to the character of the individual.

The order, which she enjoined her ministers to observe on these occasions, was as follows. The priest heard in private the confessions of those who presented themselves before him. When he discovered that any of them had been guilty of sins, which subjected them to canonical penance, he sent them to the Bishop, or his grand Penitentiary. By him the terms and conditions of their penance was enjoined, their names taken down in writing, and they themselves ordered to appear at church on the first day of Lent. Accordingly on that day, they presented themselves at the church door, bare-

footed, and in mean and tattered garments, for such was the dress used for mourning in those times. On entering the church, they presented themselves before the bishop, or his penitentiary, with their heads hanging down, their eyes often streaming with tears, and with all the outward expressions of a consciousness of guilt, and demonstrations of a sorrowful and dejected mind. They then prostrated themselves on the ground, and begged to be admitted to penance and absolution. The bishop gave ashes to them all to strew on their heads, and sackcloth to cover their bodies, and while they continued prostrate on the ground, the bishop, together with the clergy and people, on their knees, recited over them several penitential psalms, and long prayers for the remission of their sins. The bishop and priests, rising, laid their hands on them as a token of their being subjected to a course of penance. After this, the bishop made them a pathetic exhortation, and, in the close, gave them to understand, that, as God drove Adam out of paradise, for his transgression, so he, likewise, was about to drive them out of the church for a time, bidding them be of good courage, and labour strenuously in the works of penance, in hopes of partaking hereafter of the divine mercy. He, then, actually pushed them from him, and bade the inferior ministers expel them out of the church. The clergy, following them to the door, repeated this response to them: "In the sweat of thy brow thou

shalt eat thy bread. For dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return." (Gen. i.) They, who were public sinners, were then required to acknowledge their guilt publicly.—It not unfrequently happened that pious persons, who were not guilty of any crime, subjected themselves, out of devotion, to the same course of public penance, as was prescribed for sinners.

The rigours of this course were diminished by almost insensible degrees: and, in proportion as they were diminished, the number of voluntary penitents increased. At length, public penance was entirely laid aside; and then the faithful began indiscriminately to present themselves before their pastor, on the first day of Lent, to receive ashes on their foreheads, pledging themselves, by this act, to devote the time of Lent to private penance, in order to prepare themselves for the more worthy celebration of the festival of Easter.

This, my brethren, is the meaning and the origin of the ceremony performed on this day. Public penance, as I before remarked, is fallen into disuse: but the necessity of penance, either public or private, is the same now, as it was in former times. The justice of God is as great as ever it was, and his sanctity has suffered no diminution. The sins, which we commit, are as hateful in the sight of God, as those which our forefathers committed: and as much is required of us, to make atonement to his justice, as was required of them. They did

penance, and their penance was more severe, during the whole length of time that it continued, than is observed by us during the short course of Lent; and yet they did not do too much; they did not over-satisfy the injured justice of God. We must do penance, likewise: and our penance, like theirs, must be proportionate to our transgressions. The austerities of Lent in these times, are not to be compared with the austerities, which pious Christians submitted to in former times: and the austerities which pious Christians submitted to, were not to be compared with those, which were endured by the *canonical penitents*. What then are we to think of ourselves. We are all indebted to the divine justice by the sins of our past lives, and, as we have never submitted to the rigours of public penance, there is too much reason to fear that we have never imposed on ourselves in private, that penance which his justice required. Let us, therefore, spend this Lent in the spirit of true repentance. Let us consider ourselves as sinners doomed by the justice of God to endure the few inconveniences, and austerities, which yet remain of the ancient discipline. Let it be the determination of all, to approach the altar, and receive the ashes on their foreheads; with a sincere desire of being reconciled to their injured God; and let them consider it as a pledge of their pious resolution to observe the rules of Lent as strictly as their health and strength will permit. Let them

approach to the altar, and henceforward consider themselves as private penitents, bound to observe the exercises of mortification and penance, and to make amends for all the deficiencies of their former lives.

It cannot be expected that fasting, or abstaining, will ever be pleasing to flesh and blood. Lent will always be in opposition to the feelings of corrupt nature. But we are not to consult the feelings of corrupt nature in these things. We are to consult our own interest, and the glory of God.—We must suffer condign punishment for our sins, either in this world or in the next. There is no exemption. If we suffer in this life, in the spirit of penance, our sufferings will be sanctified by the merits of our Lord and Saviour, and will contribute powerfully to satisfy the injured justice of God. But if our sufferings are reserved for another world, they will not be sanctified by the merits of Christ; and consequently we shall have to pay to the divine justice, even to the last farthing of our debts. Our interest, therefore, requires, that we should submit to as severe a course of penance, in this life, as our health and strength will permit.

But why do I talk of interest? The saints delighted in sufferings, principally for the purpose of pleasing God. They prayed for sufferings. They were almost unwilling to live without suffering. Either suffer or die, was their

pious exclamation. This eagerness for suffering is not, indeed, required of us. But the examples of the saints ought to convince us that, the more fervent we are, the greater joy and delight we shall experience in suffering; and that, in proportion to the opposition we feel in our breasts to mortification and penance, the more ought we to be alarmed, because it will show how far we are removed from the paths of compunction and fervour.

Were it, however, our happiness that we had spent the whole of our lives in innocence, and that we had nothing of our own to satisfy for, nevertheless the sins of others ought to excite our compassion, and induce us to offer up works of atonement for them. Our fellow-creatures are our fellow-members; and as such, we ought to endeavour to relieve them in their necessities. Forming with them but one body, under the same head Jesus Christ, we ought to consider their wounds as our own, and labour to apply proper remedies to them. In fact, this compassion, these supplications, these desires of contributing to the spiritual good of others are so interwoven with the exercises of Lent, as to enter into all the prayers and offices of the Church at this time. How many sinners have been reclaimed, how many public calamities have been averted by the prayers and fasts of the Church! There never was a time, when wickedness was more prevalent, or when

men had greater reason to dread the weight of the anger of God. The evils, which have been scattered over the world, and the scourges, with which God has afflicted Christendom on every side, ought to excite us to deprecate his judgments, and to labour by our sighs and fasts to appease his indignation. The affection, which Moses entertained for his people, induced him to petition the Almighty that he himself might never enter the land of promise, rather than his mercies should not be extended to them. St. Paul wished even to be an anathema for his brethren. And shall we, who have too much reason to fear that our sins have greatly contributed to excite the anger of God, remain hardened, and insensible, amidst the arrows of divine vengeance? Shall we calmly look on, when so many souls are perishing, and not endeavour to engage the divine mercy to rescue them from those judgments, in which we ourselves deserve to be involved with them?

In order more effectually to induce us to labour strenuously at this holy time, the Church reminds us of our origin, and of our speedy return to the same lowly state: *remember man, that thou art dust, and into dust thou shalt return.* This, perhaps, will be the last opportunity that many of you will have, of uniting with the Church, in general supplications for mercy. Be then in earnest. The consolations of heaven will enliven you in

the midst of your fasting. You have every thing to hope for, and nothing to fear. Enter, therefore, on your course, like the saints, rejoicing : and then you may confidently look forward to a participation of the merits, which your Saviour purchased for you by his own sufferings.

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT.

ON THE MOTIVES FOR FASTING.

*And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterwards hungry.....*MATT. iv. 2.

THUS it was, my brethren, that our Lord and Saviour prepared himself for the opening of his important ministry ; and his example is recorded, in the inspired writings, both for our instruction and imitation. It was not duty that induced him to spend these forty days in the wilderness in fasting ; for he, who was able to lay down his life, and take it up again, could have entered on his mission, and fulfilled it according to the will of his Father, without subjecting himself to this preparatory fast. Neither was it required for the redemption of mankind ; for, one drop of his blood was more than sufficient for the cancelling the sins of the whole

world. The only real motive which induced our Saviour to fast these forty days and forty nights, was to give us an example, in his own person, of self-denial and penance, in order to encourage us to turn away from the pleasures of the world, at least for a time, and by experiencing the sweets of the consolations of heaven, to imbibe a relish for mortifications and sufferings. *He suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should walk in his footsteps.* (1 Pet. ii.)

In these latter times, when sensuality and love of pleasure occupy the attention, and engross the affections of so many, who ought to be followers of the crucified Jesus, the subject of the present gospel is particularly deserving of notice. In the early ages of the Church, the faithful were willing to suffer with their divine Master. Every year they accompanied him into the wilderness; and, although they did not, like him, fast wholly from food, they spent the forty days in the exercises of rigorous fasting, self-denial, and prayer. In these times, a different spirit seems to animate the faithful. They are willing to go into the wilderness; but they wish it not to be a place of retirement: they are desirous of fasting; but they wish to do it without feeling pain. They consent to put their shoulders under the cross; but they want Simon of Cyrene to ease the load, before they themselves have felt the weight of it. They want to purchase the waters of life; but

it must be nearly free cost.—The example of our Saviour, therefore, as recorded in the gospel of this day, particularly calls for our attention. It will convince us, that fasting and self-denial, in order to be beneficial, must be painful;—a crucifixion, as it were, of the flesh, with its sensual appetites. I will present to you a few reflections on this subject.

Fasting has always been considered as of peculiar efficacy in subduing the passions, and raising the mind to a state of christian perfection. The reasons are as follow. We are composed, as it were, of two parts—the old or *sensual* man, and the *spiritual* or new man. These, according to St. Paul, (Col. iii.) are continually striving for the mastery. If the *sensual*, or *old man*, prevail, to him the soul will be subject. She will become sensual and corrupt, ever seeking after pleasures and gaieties, and little solicitous for the things of God. When that is the case, the influence of the spiritual man is lost, or the best that can be said is, that his influence over the soul is confined to the suggesting a few silent admonitions concerning the danger of her state, pressing solicitations to renounce the tyranny of her passions, and serious alarms concerning her future state.—If, on the other hand, the *spiritual*, or *new man*, prevail, the soul will be spiritual. She will be always seeking after the things of God. She will be striving to become more and more perfect. She will prefer the will of God before the

possession of all created things. She will walk in the footsteps of the saints, and become perfect in the practice of every christian virtue. When this is the state of the soul, the influence of the sensual man is confined within very narrow limits. His power enables him only to suggest to the mind temptations of various kinds, which the soul easily repels with the assistance of the grace of God.

Thus it is with us, according to the doctrine of the inspired Apostle. We are, moreover, informed, that the issue of the contest depends on our own choice: that the one, whom we favour most, will prevail; and that the one, whom we most oppose, will be reduced into subjection. (Rom. viii.)

It will not be necessary to bring forward arguments to prove, that it is your duty, and your interest, to oppose the sensual, and to favour the spiritual man. Of this you are already convinced. In fact, the object of your attendance at this place is, to receive instructions how this work is to be done, and to solicit the assistance of heaven in the prosecution of it.

Our only question is, how the sensual man is to be effectually opposed? The scriptures reply, that it is by resisting our passions, denying our corrupt inclinations, and crucifying our flesh with its vices and concupiscences. This must be done, or the sensual man will never be subdued.

Let us, however, reason upon the subject,

and we shall be able to place it before our eyes in a clearer point of view. The laws of God are, many of them, in direct opposition to corrupt nature. In fact, they were intended to counteract the influence of our passions, and reduce them into subjection. To be able, therefore, to comply with these laws, we must be accustomed to resist our inclinations ; we must be habituated to self-denials ; we must acquire a command over ourselves ; we must know how to refuse to indulge even in lawful gratifications. This may be exemplified by the conduct of a man, who is a stranger to the gospel maxims—who is a professed worldling. With him, *Will* is every thing. He denies himself no gratification, except when worldly considerations, such as health, character, or interest, induce him to refrain. The will of God is what he seldom or never consults. When, therefore, temptation comes upon him, what inducement has he to resist it ? If the gratification be injurious to his health, or to his good name, or to his worldly interests, provided he be a prudent and sober man, he will reject it without much difficulty. But where these considerations are of little weight, as is too generally the case, what will be the consequence ? A violent propensity, an eager inclination, will lead him into the greatest excesses. He may afterwards, perhaps, severely condemn himself ; but as his repentance arose merely from temporal motives, it soon wears away ; and no

sooner does the same temptation assail him again, than he falls as easily as he did before. Hence is to be found so many habitual sinners. Hence, even among those who are followers of religion, at least externally, are to be found so few who sincerely forsake their evil ways, and never fall back into their former sins. They have not the will of God for their guidance. They have not the sanctification of their souls truly at heart. They are not accustomed to self-denials. They are slaves to the sensual man.

On the other hand, as the passions are increased by pampering the flesh, they are weakened in proportion as the flesh is weakened, or as the depraved appetite is resisted. The flesh must be crucified, as the Apostle enjoins, (Gal. v.) and in proportion as it is crucified, so much the more easily shall we be enabled to fulfil the painful, self-denying duties of the gospel. Now, how is the flesh more truly crucified than by fasting? I speak of fasting, not through necessity or poverty, but for the love of God, and in the spirit of penance. Look at the truly just man. Who will discover violent propensities to evil in him, whose body is extenuated, and whose knees are weakened, like those of the Royal Prophet, by fasting? What effect have temptations to unlawful enjoyments on him, who refuses himself the gratifications which nature most loudly calls for? What difficulties will restrain the man from

serving God, who has overcome the difficulty of refraining from his usual food, in order to please him?—The sensual appetite is the most violent propensity of nature. And we may truly say, that, by keeping this propensity in subjection, we conquer nature itself. When this is done for the love of God, and for the purpose of rendering ourselves obedient servants to his will, little difficulty will be found in overcoming every other obstacle to the completion of that desirable object.

In this manner, my brethren, is fasting a preventative of sin. Apply to it, therefore, according as your health or occupations will permit. Let it be accompanied with the true spirit of piety and religion. Be not disheartened by the feelings of hunger. Be not discouraged by the painful sensations, which flesh and blood may experience. Remember that the flesh must be crucified, in order to subdue its vices and concupiscences. Your Saviour suffered hunger and thirst, during his fast of forty days; and although upheld by his divine power, he suffered the pain of it in the same manner as we should have done, had we fasted with him, for he was a man like unto us in every thing, excepting sin. Apply to this painful work of penance, therefore, with a willing mind, and you will find that there will be little difficulty in conquering all your corrupt inclinations. You will find that this fast of forty days will contribute effectually to establish

in your souls the reign of the *spiritual man*; and enable you to spend the remainder of the year in a more perfect obedience to the will of your heavenly Father.

If your strength, or occupations will not allow you to fast, chastise your bodies by other works of mortification. Deny your will: refrain from superfluities: take no more food than what is necessary, and let that be of a more ordinary kind: drink little of fermented liquors, or, at least, take no more than what is necessary: forsake animosities: forgive, and love your enemies: pray more frequently, and fervently: give more abundant alms to the poor, and allot some time every day to the practice of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, according as circumstances may offer, or your means may permit. Do these things for the love of God: and then, although you may not be capable of fasting, you will effectually weaken the power of the *sensual man*, and strengthen the spirit of piety in your souls.

Besides being a preventative of sin, fasting, or works of mortification, are necessary for us on another account, namely, in order to make satisfaction to the justice of God for our past sins. The sinner must suffer for his sin, either in this world, or in the next. The justice of God exacts it: and the power of God will cause it to be endured. If we patiently carry the crosses, which are laid on our shoulders in

this life : if we submit willingly, and in the spirit of penance, to the pains, and sufferings, and losses, and contradictions, and injuries, which the Almighty is pleased to inflict on us : and if to these we unite the pains of self-denial and fasting, in proportion to the heinousness of our sins, we shall make atonement to his injured justice, and nothing will be found in us for the fire of divine justice to prey upon hereafter. But, if we neglect voluntary works of penance, or endure, with an impatient or unwilling mind, what the Almighty is pleased to impose on us, then the debt of punishment will remain undiminished, and the whole will be to be paid in the next world.

Let it not, however, be understood that we preach up an atonement for sin, independently of the merits of Christ. No: the merits of Christ alone stamp a value on what we do in the spirit of penance ; and through those merits alone, are they acceptable in the sight of God. In the same manner as we cannot have one good thought towards our salvation of ourselves, so likewise we cannot, of ourselves, make one act of atonement for sins committed, unless it be sanctified, and made acceptable to God by the merits of Christ.

These works of penance, it must be understood, do not, of themselves, obtain the remission of grievous sins. They may be called debts contracted by sin, and they after remain due to divine justice, and must be paid, even

after the sin is remitted. They dispose the soul, indeed, for the graces of God, and they are the accompaniments of that true sorrow and repentance, which alone can obtain the remission of sin: but sin is not remitted to us merely on account of fasting, self-denial, or other works of penance: *was I to give my body to be burnt*, says St. Paul, *and have not charity*, that is, the love of God above all things, *it would profit me nothing*. (1 Cor. xiii.)

Oh! if the punishment due to sin was remitted as soon as the guilt of it was forgiven, how different would be the lot of the truly penitent even in this world! How different, likewise, would be the lot of the wicked! The impious would not be exalted, as they frequently are, like the cedars of Lebanon. They would not, like the *rich man* in the gospel, be clothed in purple and fine linen, and feast sumptuously every day.—Neither would the *just man*, like *Lazarus*, be left to be trampled upon, to be a parable of reproach, and frequently to be persecuted even unto death. A new order of things would take place. The just would be exalted, and the wicked would be humbled. There would be no cause why the just should be chastised; and therefore a just God would not visit them with afflictions:—The wicked would be the objects of divine wrath, and therefore, afflictions, losses, and evils, proportionate to their offences, would be showered down upon them.

This, however, is not the lot of the penitent servants of God in this world. Sufferings are their portion, and humiliations seem to be their inheritance. This, indeed, is the lot of the very few, who have either preserved their baptismal innocence undefiled, or who have endeavoured, during a long life of penance, to atone for the sins of their youth and of their ignorances, as well as of those whose sins are numerous, and whose works of penitence are incomplete. Of these, however, I do not speak. Their number is very small, and few or none of us are to be reckoned amongst them. To them may be applied the sentence of our Lord: *He chastiseth those whom he loves.* (Heb. xii.) And he chastiseth them in order to add to the splendor of their eternal crown.

But for us, it is expedient that we constantly bear it in mind that sufferings are our due, on account of the sins of our past lives. It is our duty to consider, that, although we may have repented of our sins, although we may entertain a reasonable hope that the guilt of them has been remitted, a debt of justice is still due, and that we must suffer, voluntarily or involuntarily, either in this world or the next, before that debt will be cancelled, and our admission to eternal happiness take place.—It is just that it should be so. After having abused the gifts of God by the inordinate indulgence of the sensual appetite;—after having preferred our own will before the will of God;—

after having despised him, by preferring earthly objects before his holy love;—after having accumulated a treasure of wrath, by sins of lust, of swearing, of theft, and of lies;—is it reasonable to suppose that, because the goodness of God is ready to pardon our manifold guilt the moment we sincerely repent, no reparation whatever is required by the attribute of his injured *justice*? No punishment whatever due to the rebellious flesh?—Sin may be called a robbery: for, thereby, we rob God of his honour and glory. And is it not just, that restitution should be demanded, and given, even although the offence be remitted?

Oh! let us acknowledge the justice of God, and with all sincerity do penance, if not in sackcloth and ashes, at least in the most perfect manner that health and circumstances will allow. We deserve to be chastised. Let us submit cheerfully to the restraints, which are laid upon us at this time; and let us add voluntary mortifications of our own. In particular, let us deny our will—that rebellious will, which has so often led us into sin. Let us lay a restraint on our temper, and ill humours, and learn to bear up with each others burdens. Let us mortify our pride—that restless evil, the cause of all our woe, by courting humiliations, or by patiently enduring the humiliations, which come upon us without our concurrence. Let us, in a word, endeavour to do penance, not in the way which is most pleasing to corrupt nature,

but in the way which is best calculated to crucify the flesh with its vices and concupiscences. Let us love God better than we love ourselves. Let us respect his honour and glory more than we do this earthly frame, which is so soon to be dissolved into its original dust. Let us regulate our whole conduct in the manner, in which we shall wish to have regulated it, when our last moment is at hand.

Oh! the great Model, which we have before our eyes, in the person of our Redeemer, ought to be more than a sufficient inducement to allure us into the ways of penance. He fasted, not for himself, but for us, and for our example. He suffered, not for himself, but for us, and for our example. Let us learn to suffer with him. Let us walk in his footsteps. Let us be penitents, not in word only, but in deed and truth. *Now is the acceptable time: now is the day of salvation. Let us not then receive the grace of God in vain: but in all things let us exhibit ourselves as the ministers of God in much patience, in tribulations, in necessities, in distresses.* —Our conflict with flesh and blood will not be long. The Lord—the just judge, will, in his good time, reward our labours; and a crown of ineffable glory will be our eternal inheritance.

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT.

ON SEEKING AFTER TRUE HAPPINESS.

And he was transfigured before them. And his face did shine as the Sun, and his garments became white as snow. MATT. xvii.

IN this gospel, my brethren, the Church exposes before our eyes our blessed Lord and Redeemer surrounded with the glory of his transfiguration. Last Sunday he was presented before us in the midst of the severities of fasting, and the perils of temptations. The motive, which induces our holy mother, the Church, so suddenly to change the scene, and to call our attention to this glorious and enlivening object, almost in the commencement of this time of mourning and penance, is to encourage us to go on with alacrity, and to persevere with fervour in the painful exercises of mortification and self-denial, by the assurance that the time of trial will not last long; and that an eternal weight of glory will here-

after crown our fidelity, if we persevere to the end.

Our Lord exhibited himself, in this glorious appearance, before his chosen disciples, a short time before his passion, for the purpose of strengthening their faith, and assuring them that, as it was to be with him, so it would be with them, namely, that present sufferings would lead to future glory. For the same purpose our Lord is transfigured, as it were, before us, on this day. With him are exhibited to our view his two faithful servants, Moses and Elias, (both of whom fasted forty days,) shining with brightness, and encircled with rays of light, almost like unto himself, for the express intention of inducing us to submit cheerfully to the rigours of this holy time, in hopes of being hereafter united to them in the regions of undisturbed and inexpressible happiness.

Let us, then, lift up our heads. Let us fix our eyes on the mansions of bliss. Let us contemplate the prize, for which we are fighting, and stretch forward eagerly to the course that is set before us. Our time of trial will not last long: neither will it be painful to us, provided we are fervent and faithful. The consolations of heaven will enliven our desponding spirits here below, and the prospect of future glory will change the thorns of penance into roses of pleasure. Let us, therefore, my brethren, look up with cheerful confidence, and contemplate

the glory, which awaits the faithful and penitent disciple of Jesus.

The nature of man continually solicits him to seek his own happiness. In all his actions, in all his projects, he has this motive in view. Whether it is that he endeavours to encrease his worldly substance, or that he weens after dissipation and pleasure; whether it is that he administers to the necessities of his suffering brethren, or that he shuts his bowels to the tender feelings of compassion, he is actuated by motives of self-interest, or of self-gratification, in one shape or another. The charitable person indulges the feelings of his nature, and, when religion does not guide his hand, he shows, by his ostentation, or by some secret complaisance that he feels within himself, that the gratification of his natural propensity was his principal motive. The avaricious man imagines that the desires of his soul will be satisfied, when he has realized a certain property. He labours, and he toils, in hopes of being able one day to say to himself: *my soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thy rest, eat, drink, make good cheer.* (Luke xii.)—The ambitious man places his happiness in honours, and titles, and conquests, and seeks after them, in the midst of the greatest dangers, with ardour and perseverance, expecting that peace and contentment of mind will be his portion, when his efforts are crowned with success.—The voluptuous man, supposing that

true delight is to be found only in the enjoyments of sensuality, runs into dissipation, makes pleasure his study, and eagerly grasps at every bubble of vanity, hoping that the cravings of his soul will be satisfied, when he has satisfied the inordinate cravings of flesh and blood.

Thus it is, my brethren, with the children of men. They all seek their own advantage: they all seek after what they expect will impart happiness to them. It is the same with you. The motive of benefiting yourselves, or of enjoying something which you call good, actuates you in every thing you perform. Whether it is that you labour, or whether it is that you neglect your work; whether it is that you lay by for the time of need, or whether it is that you are heedless for the future; whether it is that you indulge your passions, or whether it is that you reduce them into subjection; whether it is that you devote all your means of enjoyment to yourselves, and seek your own ease and convenience, alone, or whether it is that you scatter blessings around you, and consult the happiness and comfort of others, as well as your own, you have always in view some advantage or pleasure, that will accrue to yourselves, either durable or momentary, internal or external. —It is not, indeed, that men are always guided by a sound judgment, and seek after that which will be *most* advantageous to them. No: they too frequently deceive themselves in

this respect. But, whatever their misconceptions may be, we may truly say, that they always seek some advantage or pleasure to themselves, either real or imaginary, in every thing that they do. It is the same with me: it is the same with you: it is the same with every one: it is human nature itself. The more you consider the motives of your conduct in all your actions, the more you will be convinced that this statement is correct.

When, therefore, we consider how beneficent Providence has been in the formation of our nature, by implanting in our breasts such a constant, and persevering eagerness to promote our own advantage, and to seek after happiness:—when again we consider how clearly he has pointed out the things that are for our peace, and the difference between them, and the things which will bring with them only momentary gratifications, and be succeeded by real and eternal evils, how must we lament the blindness of men,—how must we lament the perversity of their judgment:—how must we be astonished at the idea that they should prefer to run after transitory pleasures, rather than seek after that pure, unadulterated, and permanent happiness, which is set before them, in the practice of the duties of religion! May not such people be justly compared to children, whose affections are fixed on mere toys, and who would lament the loss of these their play-things, more than the loss of their paternal

inheritance. Such things in infants we excuse, because they are not come to the use of reason. But when we look to men, and find them acting like infants in the concerns of their souls:—when we look to men, and see them priding themselves on their imaginary mental endowments, and preferring their momentary sensual gratifications, before their eternal inheritance, what can we say but that they are giving a preference to mere baubles—to the toys—the playthings of this world, which are intended only for their amusement during the pilgrimage of life, before the possession of the substantial and the eternal inheritance of the good things of the world to come.

Oh! my brethren, let us look to our true interests. Providence has implanted in our nature an eager desire to consult our own happiness: and, by the means of revealed religion, he has given us a knowledge of the source whence happiness is to be derived. Revelation informs us, and universal experience teaches us the same, that this happiness is not to be found in the world, nor in the following of self-will, nor in the gratification of the passions, nor in any thing that is earthly. Far be it from us, therefore, my brethren, to apply to any of these sources. No: let us not grasp at shadows. May it be our endeavour to seek after the substance, and not desist until we have obtained possession of it.

In the next world, we all know that heaven is

the only seat of happiness: and the Almighty has declared, experience has proved, and nature itself testifies, that, preparing for heaven, or, the testimony of a good conscience, is the only pure happiness that can be enjoyed on earth. All other kinds of enjoyment are light, and momentary, and vain.—Had we been created only for this world, this world would have been sufficient to satisfy our desires. All other living creatures, besides man, were made for this world, and here they find every thing that their appetites can seek after.—Or, had we been created for the sole purpose of seeking ourselves, or of finding happiness within ourselves, then, the gratification of our passions, the completion of our worldly schemes, and the uncontrolled power of following our own will, would have been sufficient to satisfy the cravings of our desires. But all these things will not do. There is yet a *something* wanting: and that *something* is no other than a *spiritual* enjoyment, —an enjoyment congenial with the spiritual *substance*, if I may so call it, which forms our better part, and which is the *soul*. This spiritual enjoyment is found in the practice of virtue, of that virtue, which consists in the love of God above all things, and of our neighbours as ourselves.

Knowing, therefore, where happiness is to be found, let us consult our own interests, and apply to that source, whence is to be derived every thing that can satisfy the cravings of the

heart. We have a good master to serve, and he will infuse into the souls of his faithful servants consolations and delights, far beyond all that the world imparts to its deluded followers. —Ah! if the children of men are so eager after earthly things; if they labour with such earnestness for the bread that perisheth; if they fix such importance on the momentary possession of wealth and opulence; if they place the summit of their wishes in the happiness, such as it is, which this world can impart, and make it the object of all their anxious and protracted labours:—what ought to be our desires, what ought to be our labours, and persevering efforts to obtain possession of that inexpressible and unadulterated happiness, which is so clearly pointed out to us? They are running after the shadow; shall not we run with equal eagerness after the substance? They are fighting for a corruptible crown; shall not we fight with equal resolution for an incorruptible one? They are pleasing themselves with the hope of enjoying a momentary, but imperfect, taste of comfort and delight; and shall not we be overjoyed at the certainty that we have it in our power to be found worthy to participate in the plenitude of the most perfect delights for eternity, in the bosom of the Almighty? Let us, then, labour in earnest. We know what is to be done: let us fly to the work before us, without delay. Shall it be said, that there is one amongst us,

that can look forward to the cheering prospect, and not endeavour to reach it? Is it possible that there should be a single individual, who, knowing the means of procuring every thing that could give him happiness in this world, and prepare him for happiness in the next, will not avail himself of that knowledge? and instead thereof, sit himself down in the midst of the husks of swine, which he knows can never satisfy his desires? What should we think of the man, who, with an opportunity before him of obtaining possession, in a conscientious manner, of an immense treasure, should content himself with merely viewing the heaps of gold and silver; and, instead of embracing the means of making the treasure his own, and thus providing for himself and family, should rest satisfied with the paltry pleasure that he enjoyed from beholding the glitter arising from it? Should we not class such a man with the perfect idiot? Let us not expose ourselves to the same reproach, in a business of infinitely greater importance. We know where true enjoyment is to be found. Our Lord and Saviour has clearly pointed it out to us. We are convinced from his own words, that the sincere followers of virtue and piety are the only true happy men on the face of the earth. We know that they have chosen the better part. We applaud them for it, at least in our hours of retirement. We envy their peace and serenity of mind,

and we earnestly desire that our last end may be like unto theirs : and shall it be said, that we are satisfied with the view of happiness, and not endeavour to attain it? Shall it be said of any of us, that we are pleased with the beauty of holiness, and that we refuse to run into its embraces? Shall it be said, that we know how to be happy, and that we will not take the trouble to make ourselves happy? Oh! this would be acting in direct opposition to reason. This would be acting in direct opposition to that innate principle of self-preservation, and of self-love, which is implanted in the breast of every created being.

It is true, that, situated as we are, it requires considerable efforts to take off our affections from visible things, in order to fix them on those that are invisible. The impressions made on our minds by the world, and its alluring pleasures, are frequently very deep, and much time and labour are required to efface them, particularly when the passions are strong, and the means of indulgence are at hand. But, what sacrifice can be too great for the purchase of happiness? For our encouragement, we have the example of our Saviour before our eyes. He had joy set before him. He had at his command all that the world could give, and nevertheless he endured the cross. He was not exposed to any danger of defiling

his soul by partaking of earthly comforts ; and yet, for the purpose of inducing us to take resolution, and renounce the vain pleasures of a deceitful world, he renounced them himself, and submitted cheerfully and voluntarily to the toils of a laborious life, and to the agonies of an ignominious death. We have it in our power, and it is our interest, to walk in his footsteps : and shall it appear hard to us, to do what our Lord and Master has done, expressly for our imitation. Worldlings run on in the thorny paths of the world, without stopping. They listen to the suggestions of the mortal enemy of mankind, and obey his mandates without hesitation, when their temporal interest is to be benefited, altho' it will bring no real happiness to their minds, nor hold out to them any prospect of real happiness hereafter. And shall we stop,—hesitate,—tremble, before we enter into the paths of virtue ? Shall we be afraid of entering into determinate resolutions of complying with the sweet and gracious commands of a tender Father, who wills only our happiness ? No : my brethren, may such cowardice, such senseless timidity, never prevail over one individual amongst us. —Nothing more is required of us, than to take resolution to offer some little violence to flesh and blood, and to be in earnest in our desires to be happy. The same Lord, who has shed his blood for us, and who has trodden the path before us, stretches out his hand to our assist-

ance, engages to uphold us, and to carry us, as it were, upon his shoulders. Why, then, should we hesitate? Can we be so attached to this wretched carcase, in which we are inclosed; can we be so fond of the body of this death, as to forego real and substantial blessings—even happiness temporal and eternal, rather than it should suffer a few privations, which will last only for a time? No : never let it be said that there is one amongst us that will act so contrary to his own interest, so opposite to the dictates of reason.——Had it been even decreed by the Almighty, that the true Christian should not enjoy one single instant of consolation and delight during the whole of his mortal pilgrimage, but that wretchedness and misery should be his portion until such time as death came to his relief; what reason would he have to complain, if, in the end, he was to be admitted into the mansions of bliss, and to be happy with his God for all eternity!——But, when we know that virtue has a reward on earth;—when we know that the good man alone is happy here below;—and when we know, that the few sufferings, which we have to endure, will be sweetened with the consolations of heaven, then, how weighty are the reasons, and how powerful the motives, to enter into the ways of virtue and piety! This being the case, shall we hereafter have any reason to complain, if, on our refusal to follow the ways of virtue, we

are excluded from the mansions of eternal happiness ?

Oh ! my brethren, let us look up to our Lord in the glory, which is represented to us in the gospel of this day. He is transfigured before us, on purpose to encourage us to repentance by the prospect of future bliss. If we put on the garments of mourning and affliction, it will only be for a time :—if our faces are disfigured with fasting, and our bodies emaciated by austerities, it will only be for a time. Ere long, the gates of bliss will be opened to us, if we persevere in the works of penance, and bring forth worthy fruits ; and then our faces shall shine like the sun, and our garments shall become white like snow.—He exhibits before us two of his faithful servants, Moses and Elias, both of whom fasted forty days, as a surety that the same happiness, which has been awarded to them, is prepared likewise for us. Let us then be in earnest. The rewards set before us are worthy contending for. St. Peter was transported with such delight, at the sight of his Lord in glory, that he could not contain himself : he exclaimed, *Lord, it is good for us to be here.* But, with what delight shall we be transported, when we behold the God of heaven in the midst of his glory, when we ourselves shall be transfigured, and become like unto him ! With what ardour shall we exclaim : *Lord, it is good for us to be here !* Let us,

then, take courage. If we suffer with Christ, we shall reign with him : and then we shall be feelingly and practically convinced, that all that can be endured in this life, is not worthy to be compared with the weight of glory, which shall then be revealed in us.

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT.

ON GOOD EXAMPLE.

He that is not with me, is against me: and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth, LUKE xi. 23.

THIS, my brethren, is a declaration, which our Lord made to the Jews, and the same the Church proposes to all Christians at this time, as equally applicable to them. *He that is not with me, is against me.* If we are not with our Lord, we are against him. *He that gathereth not with me, scattereth* : if we gather not with him, we scatter. It is vain to suppose that we can steer a middle course in religion. It is vain to suppose that a man may be indifferent about promoting the honour and glory of God, and the salvation of souls, and yet live the life of a Christian. No : *he that gathereth not with me, scattereth.*—Attend, therefore, my brethren, to this solemn declara-

tion, and make your conduct, henceforward, reprehensible to the tenor of it. Your Saviour, in all his actions, sought the honour of his Father, and the salvation of repenting sinners. Do you the same, that you may gather with him. The first implies a necessity on your parts of preferring the will of God, and his honour and glory, before all other things. The second implies the necessity of seeking the salvation of your fellow-creatures, according to the means which may be placed within your power. To this second point I shall particularly call your attention in this discourse.

You are not required, indeed, to labour for the salvation of souls, in the same manner as the appointed and ordained ministers of the Church. You are not called to the office of preaching, and administering the sacraments. But there is a way of promoting the salvation of souls, which is in the power of every individual amongst you, to which all of you are called, and to which all of you are strictly bound. I mean, giving good example to your brethren, by a strict adherence to the principles and to the spirit of your religion, and alluring them to the practice of virtue by the odour of your piety. This you are all able to do, and are bound to do; and if you neglect to do it, you give bad example, and thereby you are against your Lord; for, instead of gathering with him, you scatter.

To give good example, therefore, is an universal precept. *In all things*, says St. Paul to

Titus, (ii. 7.) *show thyself an example of good works.* The same duty is enforced by our Lord in stronger terms: *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, who is in heaven.* (Matt. v. 16) The nature of man is such, that he is greatly influenced in the regulation of his conduct by the examples of those around him, and, according to the society which he frequents, he is either allured to walk in the paths of virtue, or seduced into the ways of vice. To seek good example, therefore, and to give good example, is an essential part of the character of a Christian.

But, in what manner are we to give good example? Not by an ostentatious display of our virtue and piety. Not by doing our good works for the purpose of being seen by men. This would be a criminal pride, and, according to our Saviour's words, (Matt. vi.) *we should thereby have received our reward.* But by endeavouring to live according to the exact rules of the gospel, without any regard to the applause, or to the censure of men;—by fulfilling every duty to the best of our power;—by consulting the honour and glory of God in all our actions;—and by living up to the rules of christian charity towards all mankind. This is the good example that we are required to give. If we live in this manner, although we may be solicitous, like the saints, to conceal our virtues from the eyes of men, our example will

shine forth with brilliant splendor, and be highly beneficial to our fellow-creatures. Vices may be concealed, to a certain degree: but, virtue—true genuine virtue can never long remain hidden. It will shine forth like a light in the midst of darkness: and, although it may be covered as it were with a bucket, it will give testimony that there is a light within: and the veil of humility, which strives to conceal it, will only add to its brilliancy, and to its good effects upon others.

Beneficial, however, as is good example, it must not be expected that every one will profit by it, or that its effects will be at all times immediately perceived. No: the world is too proud, too envious, too fond of calumny and detraction, to allow even genuine piety to pass without a censure. However good your conduct may be, however pure your intentions, however sincere your piety, there will be found some who will arraign your character, accuse you of imaginary faults, and treat you as hypocrites. Were an angel from heaven, with all his perfections, to live amongst us, he would experience the same treatment. Pretended blemishes would be discovered in him: and, as real faults could not be laid to his charge, suspicions, and idle tales would be raised against him, and propagated. Our Lord himself, in whom the least shadow of sin never existed, was treated in this manner by the children of the

world: and his disciples, let them be who they may, must expect the same.—We are not, however, to set less value on the merits of good example, on that account. The truth will, in God's good time, be made manifest: and then, the example of perfect resignation, and patience under trials, will shine forth with redoubled lustre.—Let us, therefore, my brethren, be earnest in doing good, caring neither for the applause, nor for the censure of men. Our example will not fail, in the end, of producing its effects, and perhaps will be the means, in the hands of God, of promoting the salvation of many of our fellow-creatures.

O if we have any zeal for the honour and glory of God, if we have any love for our neighbour, what greater inducement can we have to be attentive to the duties of religion? For, what is good example? Is it not serving God with our whole strength? Is it not loving him with our whole heart? Is it not preferring his will and law before all things? And what is this but promoting our own sanctification? What other means are there of drawing down upon us the blessings of God in this life, and preparing ourselves for his blessings in the next? And yet, by promoting our own good, by walking in the only path that will lead us to happiness, we shall be promoting the good of others, and, by promoting their good, shall be acquiring a title to a more brilliant crown of

glory! Let us then be earnest in doing good, and the choicest favours of heaven will attend our labours.

In some situations of life good example is more particularly necessary, and attended with more beneficial effects, than in others. Parents are indispensably bound to give good example to their children and family. — Children are entrusted to parents by the great Creator, not solely for the purpose of being provided for as to this world, that is, to be nursed, and fed, and educated, and comfortably settled in life; but, in a particular manner, to be instructed by them in the duties of a Christian, and to be brought forward in the way that leads to life eternal. Now, it is impossible to fulfil this great duty without the aid of good example. Parents may instruct their children, and give them a knowledge of all the moral duties of the gospel: but, unless they appear in the eyes of their children to fulfil these duties themselves, it is more than probable that they will never induce their children to practise them. Parents may exhort their children to restrain the violence of temper, and to be mild and forgiving: but their exhortations will probably be in vain, if they themselves are morose, severe, and relentless. In vain, likewise, will they exhort them to temperance and sobriety, if they themselves indulge in the excesses of luxury and dissipation. In vain will they caution them against swearing, cursing, lying, and lewd discourse,

if the children witness these same faults in them. In vain will they exhort them to adhere strictly to the rules of justice and equity, if they themselves seek their own interest in opposition to those rules. In vain will they exhort their children to be regular and attentive at their prayers, to be diligent in the frequentation of the sacraments, and to serve their God with their whole hearts, if they themselves are negligent in the performance of these great duties.—Yes, my brethren, in all probability vain will it be for parents to instil any virtue into the minds of their children, or induce them to the practice of any duty, unless they themselves set them an example. The reasons are obvious. Children have the faculty of reasoning; although they cannot, or will not, always reason justly. If their parents tell them that such or such duties are to be fulfilled in order to secure their salvation, the children will not dare to contradict them, nor refuse to believe their words. But the fact is, that children, being always accustomed to look up to their parents, as beings far superior to themselves in wisdom and experience, and having confidence in them so far as not to criticise their actions, or suppose that they would knowingly do wrong, will be more inclined to imitate their example, than follow their instructions; on the supposition that, if those duties were necessarily to be fulfilled, they, their parents, would fulfil them.—I will not say that there are no exceptions

to this rule : for, experience proves that sometimes virtuous children have been found, who have had the worst example from one or both of their parents. But these exceptions are rare indeed. The general rule is, that children follow the example of their parents, much sooner than their instructions.

How necessary, therefore, it is, that parents should give the best example to their children; not exteriorly alone; but truly and sincerely—the example of genuine christian piety! How necessary it is that they never suffer any of the human passions to influence their conduct in their presence! How necessary that they prove to them by their conduct, that they have overcome the weaknesses of human nature, and are the servants of God by choice! If parents are deficient in these respects, a severe responsibility indeed will be incurred by them. In fact, how can it be otherwise? For if, as I before remarked, the children of vicious parents are generally vicious, the children of tepid and negligent parents, generally tepid and negligent, and the children of virtuous parents generally virtuous, what other reason can be assigned for it, than that the example of parents has the greatest influence on the morals of children: and if the example of parents be the cause of the immoralities of children, the parents must undoubtedly be responsible for the effect.—No, my brethren, there is not a duty that is more strictly imposed on parents, or that

is attended with more serious consequences, or that will be more strictly demanded an account of at the bar of divine justice, than that of giving good example to their children. Frequently reflect that your children are the children of God, that they are rational beings, that they are merely entrusted to your charge for a time, and that they are entrusted to your charge chiefly for the purpose of being prepared, by your instruction and example, for the possession of eternal happiness. If you do not treat them in this manner, but, by winking at their faults, and through excess of fondness, refrain from checking in them the depravity of their nature, and giving them bad example in your own conduct, they will probably bring sorrow upon you in your advanced years, and perhaps, bring both upon you, and upon themselves, unavailing sorrows for eternity in the world to come. Whereas, on the contrary, if you treat them in this manner, they will be your comfort in the decline of life, and your crown hereafter. You will then have reason to hope, that you will meet together again in the regions of bliss, where the chief source of friendship will be, not that of being parent, or of being child, but of having been instrumental to their salvation. —What I have said of parents is applicable, in a certain degree, to superiors, and others, who have children under their charge.

Good example, likewise, is a duty which we owe to our equals, and particularly to our rela-

tions, friends, and acquaintance. This, perhaps, may be illustrated most clearly, by considering the effects of bad example. It is a common saying, that one bad sheep will corrupt a whole flock. This saying is applied to the pernicious effects, which are frequently produced by the bad example of one profligate companion. And how clearly is the justness of the application proved by universal experience! In fact, who is there amongst you, that has not suffered in his innocence by associating with the wicked? How many have been led into sins of impurity by the solicitations, or example of others? How many into intemperance, by associating with drunkards! how many into scenes of dissipation, and all their concomitant evil effects, by the allurements of worldly friends! how many have been led into habits of one vice or another, by keeping bad company! We may go farther, and say, how few have fallen from the ways of virtue, without being first led into error by the example of a dissolute companion!

If, therefore, bad example be attended with such pernicious effects, may it not be said, that *good example* will have an effect of a contrary tendency? Good example, I know, is not always sufficient to reclaim sinners. Hardened reprobates too generally hold the meek and humble followers of Jesus in derision, and consider them as parables of reproach. But, will not good example have a powerful effect on the minds of those, who are only tottering, as it

were, on the brink of the fatal precipice? Will not good example have a good effect on those who are beginning to forsake the ways of sin, and to enter on a life of piety? Will not good example be an encouragement to those who are advanced in virtue, and stimulate them to greater exertions in the pursuit of christian perfection? Will not good example be, in a general way, beneficial to all, with whom you are intimate, or with whom you associate? Will not the presence of a virtuous person frequently restrain the licentiousness even of a declared reprobate, and cause him to be modest in his speech, and decorous in his manners?— Experience teaches us that all these effects are produced by good example. And can that person be said to gather with Christ, who neglects this important duty?

There is, however, another kind of good example, which you are required to attend to; and that is, giving good example to those, who are not of *the household of the faith*, by fulfilling carefully all the duties enjoined by the gospel. I know not why it is, but true it is, that the eyes of others are fixed more intently on you, than they are on the members of any other religious communion. The least irregularity in you is particularly noticed, and a reflection immediately cast on your religion. Why, I cannot say. But this may be said, that, notwithstanding all that our enemies have said and written, to defame the purity of our moral

code, it is expected that your lives should be more regular and orderly than any others:—a certain proof that, even our most determined adversaries cannot bring their minds to believe that our tenets are so corrupt as they maliciously and scandalously represent them to be. One vicious Catholic would do more harm to our cause, than many vicious members of other persuasions would do to theirs, by the most scandalous excesses. This being the truth, the necessity of giving good example must appear in the strongest light.

Yes, my brethren, the necessity is of the strictest kind. You know not what harm you do, by every crime that you commit in the presence of others. Were you, by your bad example, to prevent only one person from enquiring into the truth, what would you not have to answer for? You would be the cause of his remaining in ignorance and error, and his soul would be demanded at your hands.

Oh! you, who think lightly of running into excesses of one kind or another, in the presence of others, think seriously of this: and let the thought restrain you in the violence of temptation. Keep a strict watch over yourselves. Your religion, and the salvation of your own soul and the souls of others, require it of you. Give good example. Let it be manifest to all men, that you live up to the moral precepts of the gospel; and let it be your study to prove

the truth of your religion, by a strict adherence to the precepts of divine and fraternal love.

In this manner it was, that the primitive Christians lived : and to this, in part, may be attributed the wonderful propagation of the Christian religion. Their example had a wonderful effect upon those, who were *pre-ordained to be saved* ; and the blood of martyrs was a seed, from which numberless believers sprang up. Do you in like manner. Be ye imitators of the virtues of the saints, and you will experience that the arm of God is not shortened, nor his mercies diminished. You may not, perhaps, receive testimony, during your mortal life, of the good that you have done ; but, at the termination of your course, all things will be made manifest to you, and you will find, that you have not scattered, but gathered with your Lord, and co-operated with him in the great work of the salvation of men. You will advance towards perfection yourselves, and you will, at the conclusion of life, receive the welcome intelligence, that you have been the fortunate means, in the hands of God, of souls being trained up to be united with you in the bosom of the Deity, for endless ages.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT.

ON THE GIFTS OF GOD.

When Jesus, therefore, had lifted up his eyes, and seen that a very great multitude cometh to him, he said to Philip, whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? JOHN vi. 5.

THE solicitude which our Lord expressed, in the above words, to relieve the corporal wants of those who came to hear his instructions, and the miraculous interposition of his power to provide a sufficiency, on that occasion, reminds us of the goodness which God is pleased to show to us during our sojournment in this land of exile, and of the debt of gratitude which is due to him on our parts. Separated as we are from the visible presence of the great Dispenser of all good, we feel within ourselves a kind of impulse, to look upon the production of things that are for our subsistence, either as the pure workings of nature, or as the fruits of our own labour, without any reference to the power of him, who is

the real Creator of them. But we are here reminded that he, who multiplied a small quantity of food, so as to suffice for the refreshment of a comparatively immense multitude, is the same, by whom is produced the annual multiplication of the fruits of the earth, and from whose bountiful hand it is, that we receive all that constitutes, and that supports our earthly frame.

When we attentively survey our relative situation, we cannot but be convinced that all we have, comes from God. Of ourselves we are nothing. We are entirely in the hands of our great Creator. It is in him that we *live, and move, and exist*. (Acts xvii.) In his arms, we possess infinitely less power than the child of one day old in the arms of its parents. We cannot live, even for one instant, without his fostering care. Consequential and great, as we may appear to be in our own eyes, when in the company of our equals or inferiors, in the eyes of God we may almost say, that we are less than nothing. Extensive and multiplied as our possessions may be, they are all dependant on him, who created them, and he has it in his power to alienate them from us, without injustice, even at a moment's notice. We seem, indeed, to possess over the members of our own bodies, such an unrestrained power, when in health and strength, as to cause the foolish, or unthinking man, to imagine that the exertion of his corporal powers depends on

his own will alone; that he can put his strength to whatever purpose he pleases, either to good, or bad, without any dependance on the permission of God; and that he can make the different members of his body administer to his orders, as perfectly as if he was the independent lord and master of them. But it all depends on the will and permission of the God who made us. We cannot move so much as a single finger, without the co-operation of this great and eternal Being.—The productions of nature, likewise, seem to spring spontaneously as it were from the earth, and the seeds entrusted to its bosom, produce their encrease in regular order. On this account, unthinking man is led to imagine that all is merely the fruit of his own industry; and too frequently partakes of them, like the irrational beasts of the fields, without once reflecting on the superior power, which was necessarily to be exerted for their creation. But reflection will tell him that they are the works of his God; and that they are works, which he is pleased to perform regularly, and in due season, merely out of love for him, and for the purpose of drawing his heart to him.

Considering, therefore, the state in which we are, how bountiful is that great Being, who so liberally supplies all our wants! who so readily lends his assisting hand to enable us to perform all the duties of life; and who so carefully watches over, and preserves us, in the

midst of the perils with which we are surrounded! What is there that is wanting to us in the good pasture in which he has placed us? Nature is made to supply amply all that is necessary for food and raiment. Her store-houses are no sooner exhausted, than they are again replenished with abundance. Season regularly succeeds to season:—light to darkness,—heat to cold,—rain to dryness. Every thing goes on according to order. Every thing is regulated with the minutest exactness. Every thing is arranged so as to bring to maturity all that the necessities of man can want, or the cravings of his sensual appetite desire.

How profitably may we employ a leisure moment, from time to time, in contemplating the works, which our bountiful God is continually performing for our accommodation and support! How pleasing and encouraging, when we survey all the varieties of creation, is the thought, that our heavenly Father made them all for our benefit! When we cast our eyes on the firmament, we are dazzled with the splendors of that bright luminary, which his Almighty power created for the purpose of diffusing light and heat to invigorate the fruits of the earth, and to bring every production of nature to maturity:—or else we behold the misty clouds wafted across the firmament, and refreshing the earth with enlivening showers.—When we cast our eyes on the earth, on one side we behold the trees shaking their majestic

heads, and inviting us, as it were, to return thanks to that beneficent Being, who formed them for the purpose of supplying our wants, and adding to our comforts.—On another side, we behold the fields cherishing, we may say, with parental care, the seeds entrusted to their bosom, nourishing them with juices extracted from their richest stores, and at length presenting their fruits to us in a state mature for our most necessary purposes.—On another side, we behold the verdant meadows, stocked with living creatures of various kinds, all supported, upheld, and brought forward, by this great Creator and Preserver, for our use and benefit:—some to assist us in our labours,—others to supply us with food and raiment.—In a word, on whatever side we turn our eyes, we behold the blessings of Providence: for, on every side, we behold the wonderful works of God,—works, which experience, aided by revelation, teaches us, were produced for no other purpose than for our benefit, in one shape or another.—These, my brethren, are pleasing reflections to the contemplative mind. Powerfully ought they to excite in our hearts, sentiments of filial love and gratitude for him, who so bountifully, and so magnificently supplies all our wants.

But it is not in the fields alone, that subjects of pleasing meditation are to be found. In your houses, in your manufactories, you are surrounded with objects, which ought to remind

you of the goodness of your God, and excite you to acts of gratitude, for his providential care, and parental tenderness. To whose munificence are you indebted for all the furniture, and comforts, which cheer your dwellings? Whence are derived the materials on which you work, and the instruments with which you labour? Who produces the light which enables you to see the objects before you? Who gives you strength of mind to contrive, and strength of body to execute the works which occupy your time? Is it not God? Of yourselves you possess nothing, and can do nothing. All comes from the hand of the great Creator and Preserver. They are his blessings: they are testimonies of his paternal love: and they are given to you for the purpose of promoting your welfare in this world, and to bring you on to happiness in the next. In every thing that you possess, you enjoy a blessing of God—you enjoy a something, which was formed by him for the love of you.—The only things which are entrusted to your care, and which were not created merely for your use and benefit, are your children. They were created for a nobler purpose. They were created for heaven. They were created for God himself. They are entrusted to your charge, with a positive injunction that you exert every means to instil into them the principles of religion, to counteract the influence of corrupt nature, to rectify their morals, and to prepare them for the possession

of that inheritance for which he made them. All other things, which you possess, were made for your use, by that infinitely amiable Parent, to whom you are indebted even for your own existence.

This is only a contracted enumeration of the blessings and gifts of God, and expressed only in general terms. In fact, it would be far above the power of man to enumerate them in detail, and to estimate each according to its true value.

Thus it is, my brethren, that we are surrounded on every side with the blessings of God—blessings, too numerous to be detailed, and too magnificent to be fully estimated, or described.

Another pleasing subject of contemplation and wonder presents itself, in the contemplation of our own nature. The body, which the Almighty has formed for you, is a piece of mechanism the most complicated, the most astonishing. Although formed out of the dust of the earth, for we see that into dust it returns again, it is moulded into bones, sinews, arteries, veins, nerves, flesh, and blood ; all uniting with each other in the most perfect harmony ;—all contributing to the support of each other ;—all depending one upon the other ;—all invigorated and maintained by the productions of the earth, which the Almighty has created for our food ; all forming within itself a complete whole, incomprehensible in all its parts to the

most minute and patient investigator;—a whole, presenting to the eye a form, beautiful for its symmetry beyond all the works of the creation, and containing within itself more wonders than it is possible for the mind of man to conceive.

In addition to this, a still greater wonder presents itself in the spiritual nature of the soul, by which this body is animated. But what shall we say of this most essential part of our composition? It is a something, and yet we cannot see it with our eyes, nor feel it with any of our senses. It is a something, totally separated from all material substance. Nothing that created nature presents before us can give us the least idea of its component parts. And yet it is a being, which, as soon as it is called into existence, bids immediate defiance to death, and becomes immortal. This is the being, which forms, as it were, the essence of our nature. This it is that animates the body. This it is that is incomprehensible above all the other works of God. This it is that causes our nature to be little inferior to that of angels. Oh! that we never degraded this exalted dignity to which we are raised.

Contemplate these wonders, my brethren, and then endeavour to form an idea of the agency of the Almighty Providence, which is required to keep this body of ours in health and strength, and the concurrence of his power, which is necessary to enable you to exert, not only the corporeal, but the mental faculties,

with which he has been pleased to endow you.—Ah ! my brethren, these considerations ought to impress on our minds, if duly weighed, the necessity of looking up to our God as our only support, and the obligation of making him a suitable return of gratitude and love.—Thus, my brethren, on every side, within you as well as without you, nothing is to be seen but the blessings of God : nothing is to be felt, but your total dependence on that infinitely amiable Being, who is your support, your protector, your parent in this world, and who, if you are obedient to his blessed will, will be your eternal reward hereafter.

In the midst of all these excesses of almighty love and power, who is there that will not say, that the most lively emotions of gratitude and love ought constantly to arise in our breasts ? Ah ! reason itself, depraved as it is, will declare that our hearts ought to be constantly fixed on so bountiful a benefactor, so persevering a protector. Religion will go still farther, and say, that we ought to keep ourselves constantly in his divine presence, to repent with the most unfeigned sentiments of sorrow for our past disloyalties, and to be ready to sacrifice with joy every satisfaction which the world or the flesh could impart, rather than offend him any more. Was it, indeed, that we were less dependent upon him,—was it that we had the power of providing for ourselves, without the assistance of his providence,—was it that we

could say that we were our own masters, and that we were something, *whereas we are nothing*, as St. Paul expresses it, then attention to the duties of reciprocal love and gratitude would not be so strictly required. But, surrounded as we are with the blessings of God, as the birds are surrounded with the air in which they fly, and the fishes with the water in which they swim, what could be more base and criminal than ingratitude? what words could be strong enough to reprobate the conduct of the wretch who, at the time that he is revelling, as it were, in the gratuitous gifts of his Maker, dares to insult the giver, and turns his back upon him, in order to embrace that enemy of mankind, whose only object is the destruction of souls!

Oh! my brethren, shudder at the very idea of ingratitude to God, in the midst of the blessings which he is continually showering down upon you. Enter into sentiments of sincere repentance for your past ingratitude. You, who behold with indifference the multiplied and incomprehensible testimonies of the power and love of your God, and dare in the face of nature to go and insult the author of them, blush and tremble, and repent of enormities, the criminality of which is beyond calculation.—You, who at every trifling subject of vexation, at every trifling disappointment, at every trifling contradiction, at every trifling discouragement, are habituated to fly into passion, and express your rage by words offensive to the Deity, cover your

faces ;—lift not your eyes to heaven, unless they are swimming in tears of sincere repentance and sorrow, for having offended that all-wise and merciful God, who suffered these things to happen to you, for the sole purpose of procuring your greater good, and of helping you forward towards heaven.—You, who are accustomed to invoke the name of God without necessity and without respect,—to call him to witness the most trifling events, and sometimes falsehoods ; —to utter curses, and sometimes the most dreadful imprecations, not less than damnation upon your fellow-creatures, or upon irrational things, when your anger is excited ; be ashamed of your ingratitude—be ashamed of your conduct : repent of the past, and keep a stricter guard over your tongues for the time to come.—You, who abuse the blessings of God, by running into the excesses of luxury or drunkenness ;—you, who the more you receive from God, the more crimes you commit against him ;—you, who may properly be said to throw the gifts of God back into his face, by making them the occasions of sin, oh ! what shall I say ? shall I say any thing to you consoling or encouraging ? Your crimes are deserving of the severest judgments : and what are you to expect ? Ah ! were you to look only to your deserts, you could expect nothing but punishment. But this offended God is a God likewise of mercy and compassion. He wills you to enter into sentiments of sincere repentance ; and on your

forsaking the error of your ways, he will, like a tender parent, pardon your wanderings, and with joy receive you again into favour.—Take advantage, therefore, of the present opportunity. Time is now at your disposal—take advantage of it, and your repentant supplications will find acceptance.—Return, then, my beloved brethren, to your Father, with the sentiments of the prodigal son, and with determined resolutions of never more departing from him. Be not discouraged by the multiplicity or enormity of your crimes ; for, were they as red as scarlet, on your repentance they shall become white as snow. But do not delay. The present time alone you can call your own. Were you to suffer this time to elapse, perhaps the opportunity may never more be presented to you, and you may die in your sins.

These are subjects, my brethren, worthy of your serious consideration. These are subjects, which ought to bring God continually to your minds. These are subjects, which ought to animate you with a heart-felt love for your bountiful benefactor, and a hatred for every thing that is displeasing to him.

Take advantage, then, of all created things, to raise up your hearts to your beneficent Lord and Master. Whether you are in the fields, in your shops or warehouses, or at your own homes, contemplate his wonders and love, and let the sight of the multiplicity of his gifts be an inducement to you to be henceforward

grateful, and obedient to his holy will.— You, who are in opulence, or in easy circumstances, give thanks accordingly for his distinguishing favours, and apply his gifts to the purposes for which he gave them to you.— You, who are in poverty, be content with your estates, and give thanks for the little, which he has been pleased to bestow upon you.

Thus we shall all give glory to God, to whom alone glory is due. Thus shall we be promoting our welfare and happiness in this world, and be preparing ourselves for happiness hereafter, where we shall be incessantly employed in contemplating the perfections and gifts of our heavenly Parent, and never more be exposed to the danger of being separated from him by wilful sin.

THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE B. V. M.

ON THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD.

Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son. Thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High... LUKE i. 31.

WE are now, my brethren, assembled together to celebrate the annual recurrence of that day, on which was wrought the greatest wonder that ever signaled the ineffable mercy of the Almighty, namely, the Incarnation of his own beloved Son. The formation of the works of the universe required no other exertion of his power than a single word: *he spoke and they were made, he commanded and they were created.* (Ps. xxiii.) The formation of man, for whom all these things were made; although created after his own image and likeness, required no other: *let us make man*, said he, *after our own image and likeness*, (Gen. i.) and he was made.—But

the great work of making a God-Man,—and a Man-God, is truly the greatest work which his omnipotence has manifested : and when we consider the motive which induced the Almighty to perform this great work, namely, to redeem lost man, and to save him from hell, we may almost say, that it is the utmost exertion of the infinite mercy and love. Oh ! let us contemplate the wonders of this mystery, and bow down our souls in acts of thanksgiving and gratitude. Let us extol the mercies of our God : but at the same time, let us tremble at the thought of his inexorable justice.

Man was originally created for the purpose of serving God for a time on earth, in the state of innocence, and then to be translated to the clear vision of the same God in heaven, without passing through the gates of death. Free-will was given to him, in order that he might serve his God by choice : and one only injunction was laid upon him, in order that his obedience might be easy. His passions being all in perfect subjection, the commands, afterwards imposed on sinful man, were easy and natural to him. Obedience to a simple injunction, of a seemingly unimportant nature, was alone required.—He, however, transgressed. He eat of the fruit of the forbidden tree : and sentence was immediately pronounced upon him, not indeed of being condemned, like the rebel angels, to the pool of unquenchable fire, but of being driven from the earthly paradise, of gaining his

bread by the sweat of his brow, of submitting to the penalty of death, and after death to the severity of judgment. Positive as was this sentence, he nevertheless restrained the arm of his indignation, on account of the innumerable souls, which were to be created, and were not actual perpetrators of his crime, in order that, by future mercies, his original design might be completed, and the places of the rebel angels filled up.

But, how was the justice of God to be satisfied for the injury it received from the transgression of our first parents? He, an infinite, incomprehensible Being,—they, the work of his hands, less, when compared with him, than an atom when compared with the universe: what could they do that would be an adequate satisfaction? The enormity of their crime was in proportion to the dignity of the Being offended, which was *infinite*: the satisfaction required was the same, that is, *infinite*. And how was a *finite* being to make an infinite satisfaction? The justice of God, however, was, and always will be inexorable. What is due, he will always exact, even to the last farthing. Of this we shall be convinced, to our unutterable anguish, if we fall into his hands after death, in the state of mortal sin.

Let the consideration, my brethren, of this justice of God, cause us to reflect frequently on the enormity of wilful sin. One only sin committed by our first parents, and committed by

them through the allurements of an enemy with the words of friendship dropping from his tongue,—committed by them, without any depravity of disposition, and without any seeming diminution of their love of God,—committed by them more through surprise, than with the deliberate intention of disobeying the commands of their heavenly Father, and incurring his indignation,—one only sin, and a sin committed under such circumstances, was so enormous in the sight of God, that sentence was immediately passed on the unhappy culprits. —One only sin, and a sin of this kind, demanded so great an atonement, that all the penitential works and fervent supplications of the prevaricators, even supposing that they spent every instant of their long life in penance and prayer, would have been totally inadequate to it. And not only that, but were it that every individual of the children of Adam, from his time to the end of the world, and were the world to continue for a million of years, to spend every instant of life in the same penitential exercises, they could never make atonement to the justice of God for that single transgression.—Oh! my brethren, how little did you think of this, when, for the sake of a paltry gratification, a petty interest, a momentary pleasure, you incurred the dreadful guilt of sin! At least, reflect seriously on it for the time to come. Be impartial with yourselves, particularly in a bu-

siness of this importance. Be not biassed by any imaginary ideas of pleasures to be found in sin. Be not deceived, like your first parents, by the notion of coming to the knowledge of good and evil, that is, of coming to the knowledge of all the good things that this world can bestow, or of feeling all the sensations which are gratifying to the desires of depraved nature. For, if you do, you will find, as they did, that you have indeed acquired a knowledge of evil, but that the knowledge you acquire of good will be, that you have lost all that would have been good for you, both for time and eternity. Weigh, therefore, henceforward, both sides of the question, before you yield to temptation. Put the gratification you will receive, into one scale, and put the indignation of the Almighty, the debt of atonement which you will incur, and the horrors of a miserable eternity, if that debt be not paid, into the other scale: weigh them with a steady hand, and deliberately, and I will be bound to say, that if you have one grain of faith, even if it be no larger than a grain of mustard; or if you have one single spark of piety, or one single sentiment of true self-love, you will spurn with horror every temptation, whether it be of lust, or intemperance, or ill-will, or defamation, or sloth, or whatever else it may be.—Oh, it is fitting for us, my brethren, to view things in this light from time to time. It will instil into

our minds a knowledge of what is good for us, and inspire us with a hatred of every thing that is evil.

Our first parents, after hearing the dreadful sentence of expulsion, pronounced upon them, received the joyful intelligence that the mercies of their offended God would come forward in their behalf, and that *the seed of the woman should crush the serpent's head*. They knew that it referred to a Redeemer to come: and that, by faith in him, and by sincere repentance, and by obedience to his holy commands for the future, the sentence of eternal reprobation was to be reversed.

Oh! my brethren, what a glorious promise! That promise has now been completed. The Redeemer has come, has suffered, and has entered into his glory. But, who was this Redeemer? The same God who created the world! The same God who created and conversed with our first parents: for, as St. John says: *The Word by whom were made all things that were made, and without whom was made nothing that was made, was made flesh and dwelt amongst us*. —Let us bow down in sentiments of perfect adoration to the Author of this incomprehensible mystery. For, what was the creation of the universe when compared with this? The creation of the universe exhibited an idea only of the powers of his divine attribute—*Omnipotence*. But that the *Word*—the Son of the great Eternal, should be *made flesh*, should become

Man, and *dwell amongst us*, seems almost beyond the powers of Omnipotence. That the self-existing Lord of all should seek his own honour and glory in all his works, is worthy of the Deity. But that this Lord of all should debase himself, appear in the form of a servant, and subject himself to the miseries allotted to the children of the first prevaricators ; and not only that, but that he should submit to be insulted, spit upon, scourged, treated as a mock king, and crucified, seems to human reason revolting, and impossible. Humility, and the love of humiliations is becoming sinners; and is acknowledged to be the foundation of every christian virtue. But is humility becoming a God? Is a love of humiliations a proper characteristic of the Lord of God? *O the depth of the riches, of the wisdom, and of the knowledge of God! how incomprehensible are his judgments! and how unsearchable his ways!* (Rom. xi. 33.) He knew the full weight of the divine attribute of his justice : and he felt the whole power of his equally divine attribute of mercy and love. From all eternity he had decreed to redeem lost man. In the fulness of time, he submitted himself to the will of his Father; descended, as it were, from his throne of Glory; took upon himself our nature; and thus exhibited the attribute of his mercy in a stronger light than he had hitherto exhibited his Omnipotence. For, great as are the works of his hands, they extend not to the limits of

Omnipotence. But the incarnation of a Man-God, and his subsequent sufferings and death, extend, we may almost say, to the utmost limits of that equally extensive attribute of divine love. For, what more could God do for us, which he has not done ?

O let us fix our thoughts on this incomprehensible mystery of a God made man. Let us make it the subject of our frequent meditations. Let us conceive the enormity of our sins; and let us pour forth our souls in acts of thanksgiving to this merciful God, who, notwithstanding their enormity, has been pleased to provide means of atoning for them to his infinite Justice.

Before this mystery of love was accomplished, how did the idea fill the minds of the ancient patriarchs and prophets, to whom the knowledge of it was particularly revealed! How did they exult, when they reflected on the Redeemer who was to come! They were then with respect to us, almost we may say, what we now are to the blessed above. They saw then as through a mist, and contemplated the majesty of the future Redeemer as a confused object. We see now as through a glass, as St. Paul expresses it, (1 Cor. xiii.) and contemplate the glories, which will be revealed to us, when we shall see him face to face, and as he is in himself. To them the shadow only of redemption was revealed: to us the substance. To them the promise only was made: to us the

promise is fulfilled. To them a glimmering only of the light was made manifest: to us the sun of Justice has risen in its meridian splendor. If then, the faint indication of the future mercies and love of an incarnate Deity excited such raptures in the minds of these holy men, what would have been their feelings, had they seen this our day? Abraham and the prophets wished to see it: and, although they saw it only in spirit, they were glad.

What, therefore, ought to be our feelings, when we consider that the words of my text : *Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son: thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High*, what, I say, ought to be our feelings when we know that these words have been long ago fulfilled? Ought they to be less than what were felt by the ancient prophets? Ought they not to be greater, in proportion as the fulfilment of a promise is more desirable than the promise alone? Ought we not to annihilate ourselves in the presence of this adorable Saviour, whose love has manifested itself in this manner for our salvation? The malefactor, condemned to death, rejoices when the tidings of a respite, and a discharge, are announced to him; and shall not we rejoice,—we, who were guilty of rebellion against God, and condemned to the second and eternal death, shall not we rejoice, when the tidings are announced to us, that our sentence is reversed, and that instead

of being eternally miserable, means are provided for us of becoming eternally, and infinitely happy?

Let us, therefore, endeavour to express our love and gratitude to our God for these, his wonderful works. He has loved us so, as to give us his only Son. We are bound to love him in such a manner, as to be ready to deliver up every thing that we possess for him. We ought to reserve nothing in our affections: not a single fibre of our hearts ought to be kept from him. In God, and for God, we ought to live: and in God, and for God, we ought to love those persons and things, which it is allowable to love.—Our gratitude ought to consist not in words only, nor in the inward feelings of our hearts, but in the whole tenor of our lives. To him we ought to sacrifice our will; and in all the different circumstances, which occur during the day, to prefer his will before our own; to do that which is most agreeable to him, in preference to that which is most agreeable to ourselves: in a word, to seek to please him in all our various occupations, and to endure cheerfully, for his sake, all the evils which his providence may be pleased to inflict on us.

Be, therefore, zealous to celebrate this mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God with those sentiments, which become sinners who have been redeemed, and who have been admitted into the liberty of the children of the

Most High. *You were by nature children of wrath*, as the Apostle says, (Eph. ii.) but you are now the elect of God, provided only, that you do what is required of the elect. All is done for you on the part of God, which his justice demands: do what is expected on your parts. You have now a direct communication with your Creator. If you pray, your prayers will be heard through the prayers of your Lord and Saviour. If you deny yourselves, your self-denials will be meritorious through the self-denials of your Lord and Saviour. If you fast, your fasts will be acceptable through the fasts of your Lord and Saviour. If you are patient under crosses, pains, and tribulations, your patience will be worthy of a reward through the patience of your Lord and Saviour. If you are persecuted, abused, calumniated, and every thing evil said against you untruly, your recompense will be very great in heaven, through the sufferings which your Lord and Saviour endured in these respects for your sake.

Correspond, therefore, with the blessings, which your great and good God has provided for you by this ineffable mystery. Every good is offered to you: deprive not yourselves of any part thereof by indifference, or neglect. Be not like those poor deluded souls, who conceive that every thing is done for them, and that, provided they have faith in Jesus, they may do the deeds of the flesh, and yet be certain of the rewards which are promised only to those who

crucify their flesh with its vices and concupiscences.

(Gal. v.) Do you, on the contrary, put on the new man : serve the Lord in sincerity and truth ; fulfil all and every one of his divine commandments : be penitent in the fervour of your minds, and lovers of God in the sincerity of your hearts. For thus, and thus only, shall you be found worthy to partake of the merits purchased for you by the incarnation of the Son of God.

PASSION SUNDAY.

ON THE ENORMITY OF SIN.

Jesus said to the Jews: who amongst you shall convince me of sin? JOHN viii. 46.

IN this manner, my brethren, does our Lord assert his innocence, and defy the malice of his enemies to convince him of sin. But why this emotion in the breast of him, who was meekness itself? Injuries and provocations of every other description he bore in silence, and with mild resignation: he endured even the ignominy of the cross, and was led to the slaughter without opening his mouth. Why then this indignation? The reason was, because, in quality of our *High Priest, holy—innocent—and undefiled*, he could not be silent under the imputation of sin. His hatred of that monster was so great, that, not satisfied with the interior testimony of his own conscience, he could not endure that the testimony of others, however unfounded, should lay it to his charge.

From our Saviour's conduct on this occasion, an instructive lesson is imparted to us. The sufferings of the body, and the painful vicissitudes of life he endured with patience, but the imputation of sin he could not endure. Sin, therefore, is an evil far greater than all temporal evils, and before all other things calls for our abhorrence: the calamities of this life ought to be endured with patience; but the evil of sin ought not to be endured. We cannot, indeed, like our Blessed Saviour, assert our innocence, and say, that we are without sin. But, having committed sin, it points out to us the necessity of weeping and mourning over the corruption of our nature, which has led us unto the precipice of this dreadful evil.

That this spirit of repentance may be excited in your minds, I will suggest to you a few ideas on the malice and the evil of sin, and, at the time that I exhort you to recollect the many times that you have incurred its enormous guilt, I will endeavour to stir up in your soul a sincere abhorrence of it, and a determined resolution to avoid it for the time to come.

I shall not pretend to describe in appropriate terms the malice of sin. A description of this kind is beyond the powers either of men or angels. The infinite perfections of God, and the immeasurable distance that there is between him and his creatures, ought to be fully understood, before the enormity of the crime of rebellion against him can be properly ascertained :

and as this is beyond the powers of any created being, every description of the malice of sin must be imperfect, and, in proportion to the distance between the offended and the offender, must be faint in its colouring. But, although we cannot give an adequate description of it, the knowledge which the revelations of God have given us concerning it, are such, if duly considered, as to be sufficient to strike terror into the mind of every sinner, and cause him, through sentiments even of self-love, to detest the error of his ways, and to enter into sentiments of sincere repentance.

By revelation we are taught, that God is a self-existent Being, far exalted above all created things;—that every perfection is centered in him;—that he is the great Creator of all things; and that he fills with his divinity, not only the earth, on which we dwell, but the vast expanse of heaven, extending to the limits of infinite space. By revelation, likewise, we are taught, that, small and insignificant as man may appear in the midst of the stupendous works of the creation, they were all created for him:—that the love of the supreme Lord and Master of them all, is principally fixed on him:—that the solicitude of this great and omnipotent Being, for his welfare, exceeds that of the tenderest mother for the welfare of her darling child:—that he exerts every means, except compulsion, to induce him to make a return of love:—that he allures him by the sweetness of his

communications ; and that he holds out before him the beauties and wonders of this earthly dwelling, on purpose to excite him to exert all his powers in hopes of attaining to that happy kingdom, where prodigies of infinitely greater magnitude, and beauty, and splendor, are prepared for his contemplation in the bosom of his Divinity.

This is the knowledge, which revelation has imparted to us. Were we seriously to reflect upon it ; and were we attentively to consider the infinite majesty of this great God, and the infinite love he entertains for us ; and then turn our eyes on ourselves, and attentively survey our nothingness in the midst of these stupendous works, what should we think of the crime of rebelling against Omnipotency,—of preferring our own will before his,—of turning our back upon him, and of seeking comfort and happiness in perishable things, at the expense of his friendship and love ? What should we think of the crime of renouncing our eternal inheritance, merely for a *mess of pottage*, a momentary gratification :—of ranging ourselves under the standard of his and our mortal enemy, the devil, merely for the sake of enjoying his pomps and vanities :—and of trampling upon every thing that is sacred and holy, merely for the pleasure of following our own will, or because we have not resolution to resist the unlawful cravings of our passions ? What should we think of such folly and criminality ? And

yet, all this is to be found in the commission of every mortal sin.

This, however, is not all. There are considerations of another kind, which will cause the guilt of sin to appear still more odious in our eyes. Notwithstanding that sin is so opposite to the sanctity of God, and a crime of such infinite magnitude in his sight, what is there that he has not done to free us from its guilt, and bring us to a reconciliation with him! After the crime of the first unhappy prevaricators in the earthly paradise, he did not exert the arm of his justice. On the contrary, he was moved to compassion. His justice demanded immediate punishment, a punishment proportioned to the enormity of the offence, which was nothing less than an immediate and eternal separation from him, and a condemnation to the most excruciating tortures of the bottomless abyss. But, infinite mercy pleaded in their favour, and the sentence was not put in execution. Temporal punishment, indeed, was immediately inflicted : the unhappy sinners were driven out of paradise, and they and their posterity were condemned to sufferings and to death. But promises were made that a Redeemer should come, and that this Redeemer, which was to be no other than the Word, proceeding from the Father, the same God with him, should take upon himself our nature, be born of a woman, and in that form should crush the serpent's head, and thereby make that sa-

tisfaction to the Deity, which neither they, nor their posterity, all united together, could have made, and thus provide them with means of escaping that eternal punishment, which must inevitably have been their lot. In fact, the Son of God, the Second Person of the adorable Trinity, was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us. He, who, in the beginning of eternity, *was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*, became a man, like unto us, suffered, as we suffer, or, perhaps, more severely than we suffer, considering the state of life and abandonment to which he was pleased to subject himself, during the space of thirty-three years; and then humbled himself even to the death of the cross, shed the last drop of his blood, died, and rose again, according to the scriptures.

Oh! my brethren, contemplate the price of your redemption. Learn from the humiliations and sufferings of the eternal Son of the great and omnipotent God, the enormity of the guilt of sin. One only word, spoken by the *Eternal*, was sufficient for the creation of the whole visible world, complicated and incomprehensible as it is, *he spoke the word, and they were made, he commanded, and they were created*. (Ps. xxxii. 9.) By the same only word also, he commanded them to *encrease and multiply*; thereby preserving a continuation of his original works.—But to redeem one only man from the guilt of sin, no less a price was necessary

than the sufferings and death of the Son of God himself. One only act of his will would have been sufficient to destroy the whole created universe; but the guilt of sin could not be destroyed, and lost man restored to a reconciliation with his offended Maker, by any other means, than by that effort of Omnipotence—the incarnation and death of his beloved Son.—Oh! why will we not reflect, as we ought to do, on this important subject?

Had one only sin ever been committed, and the Son of God had humbled himself, to the death of the cross, in order to obtain the remission of that sin, we should then have been struck with horror at the enormity of its guilt. And had any one of us been the perpetrator of the crime, that person would undoubtedly have been overwhelmed with confusion and dismay: his guilt would have continually stared him in the face: the mercies of his Redeemer would have been the constant subject of his thoughts: and his whole life would not have been considered too much to be devoted to acts of the sincerest repentance, gratitude, and love. If these effects would have been produced in our minds, had any one of us been the only sinner, why should less sensible effects be produced in our minds merely because sinners are more numerous, and sins more multiplied? The guilt of each individual sin is not at all diminished by the frequency with which it is committed, nor is the price of its ransom greater, nor are the

mercies of God less deserving of a suitable return of gratitude and love. Ought not, then, the sight of the many enormous sins, which we have committed, to produce as lively sentiments of sorrow in our minds, as if one only sin had been committed, and that that sin had been committed by us?

Oh! my brethren, let us weigh these reflections seriously in our minds: let us ponder at leisure on the crime of rebellion against the God who made us!—*What hast thou done*, said God to Cain, after he had murdered his brother Abel, *what hast thou done? The blood of thy brother crieth to heaven for vengeance against thee*. But, what reproaches may not we make to ourselves, after the commission of every wilful sin! “What hast thou done?” may we not justly say: “it is not the blood of thy brother, which thou hast spilt, and which cries to heaven for vengeance; but it is the blood of the Son of God himself, whom thou hast crucified: it is thy own soul, which thou hast murdered: it is the soul of thy neighbour, which thy example, or encouragement, has hurried into perdition. Wretch, what hast thou done?” Yes, my brethren, the severest reproaches, which it is possible for the sinner to make to himself, will not be severe enough. His ingratitude is beyond description. The enormity of his crime is beyond the powers of human conception. Suffer not, then, the short and delusive pleasures of the world, the deceitful and nugatory gratifica-

tion of the senses, to lead you into the deep abyss of sin. Be guided by reason. Be guided by religion: and suffer not the enemy to allure you to the commission of that, which will bring upon you the accumulation of all evils.

It is but too true, that the time of our pilgrimage on earth is a time of trial and temptation: and that the dangers, to which we are exposed by these temptations, are very great. The attacks of our mortal enemy, the devil, are incessant: he is always on the watch, ready to seduce us at an unguarded moment. And the example of the generality of mankind, who make light of sin, and who preach up, by word and example, the false charms of sensuality, encrease the dangers of our situation.—But, although we are surrounded with perils, and although our weakness, unassisted by a superior power, is unable to cope with the enemies leagued against us, yet, we have God on our side, provided that we accept of the assistance, which he is ready at all times to administer to us.

Let us, therefore, turn our thoughts seriously to the great business of our souls. Let us endeavour to impress on our minds deeply the sentiments of religion. Let us reflect, at our leisure, on the heinousness of sin, and on the goodness of God towards sinners.—We know that the period of our existence in this world is rapidly hastening towards a conclusion, and that the pleasures and enjoy-

ments of sensual gratifications are only momentary. We know that there is another world, for which we were originally created; that, ere long, we shall be called from this, and ushered into the other by death, and that there happiness or misery will be our lot, and that for eternity. We know that vice is a real evil, that it brings with it remorse and anxiety here, and damnation hereafter, and that it is the height of folly to listen to the suggestions of either the world, the flesh, or the devil, when it is certain that such dismal consequences will follow. We know that the way of virtue is sweet and delightful, and that piety is the only means of ensuring to ourselves the possession of it. And is there one amongst us that will deliberately swear allegiance to the devil, and voluntarily give himself for time and eternity, to remorse, anxiety, misery, and endless woe, rather than forego the opportunity of indulging a favourite passion for a moment? Oh! my brethren, be not like these senseless animals, who find happiness in the enjoyment of the fattening food, which is to prepare them for the slaughter; and who indulge in it, without once thinking of the knife which is prepared for them. Make use of your reason: it was given you for that purpose. Say to yourselves: "What pleasures have I hitherto found in sin? But were it the case, that real enjoyment was to be found in it, and that its enjoyments were to continue undiminished during the whole of life,

yet when eternity is in the opposite scale, ought not I to prefer the eternal before the temporal ? But, when it is known that the pleasure of sin is momentary, and that, at the time it gratifies the feelings of the sensual man, it inflicts a deep and deadly wound in the soul, which nothing but repentance can heal, should I not be justly classed amongst the unwise, and declared unworthy to enjoy the powers of reason, were I to yield myself up to it, to the loss of every thing that is desirable, either here, or hereafter."

These, my brethren, are a few considerations on the nature and the enormity of sin. Make them the subjects of your reflections in private. It is impossible for human language, as I remarked in the beginning of this discourse, to give an adequate description of it. The angels in heaven behold the God of Majesty face to face. Their knowledge of the Divinity is far beyond any ideas that we can possibly conceive ; and consequently their ideas of the enormity of sin must be proportionably greater than any that we can entertain. Nevertheless they cannot comprehend the infinity of God, and of course they cannot comprehend the whole of its enormity. Only God can comprehend the immensity of his own nature, and it is only God that can fully comprehend the wilful sin.

Oh ! my brethren, when we reflect on these great truths, and then reflect on the multitude of

the sins, which we ourselves have committed, what terrifying thoughts must press upon our minds ! It would be impossible to endure them, were it not that we called to our recollection the words of God himself, that *he willeth not the death of the sinner*, however numerous his offences, *but that he be converted and live.* (Ezech. xxxiii.) Let every sinner, therefore, enter into sincere sentiments of repentance. Let him call upon God for mercy ; let him sincerely and perseverantly avoid the occasions of sin for the time to come ; let him humbly submit to the trials, and contradictions, and privations, and losses, and pains both of body and mind, which Providence may be pleased to impose upon him ; let him likewise force the sensual man to submit to voluntary self-denials and acts of mortification, and he will find that the hand of God is not shortened, that he will shower down upon him blessings of every kind, and that he will assist him so to make use of temporal things, as not to lose those which are eternal.

We are also approaching the time, when the Church will call our attention, in a particular manner, to the passion and death of our Saviour. Endeavour, my brethren, to prepare yourselves for it, by more than ordinary recollection and fervour. The cross is covered at this time, not only to remind us that our Saviour hid himself from the Jews, as recorded in this day's gospel, or, in another sense, not only to fore-

warn us that Christ hid the secrets of the redemption of mankind, which was to be effected by his cross, from the unbelieving Jews, and likewise from the unbelievers of this present generation, but to remind us that now it is particularly incumbent upon us to mourn over the transgressions of our past lives, and to regret the share which we had in contributing to the ignominies and torments of his passion.

Be earnest, therefore, my brethren, and fervent in your repentance. When you were running on in the paths of error and darkness, your Jesus followed after you, carrying his cross, and tracing the way with his precious blood. Turn back, and run to his embraces. Be sincere penitents, and relinquish the ways of sin for the time to come. He, in return, will receive you into his arms, will overwhelm your souls with the purest consolations of his love in this life, and will hereafter, if you persevere to the end, admit you to the full plenitude of his enjoyments in an endless eternity.

PALM SUNDAY.

ON THE PASCHAL COMMUNION.

Tell ye the daughter of Sion: Behold thy King cometh to thee. MATT. xxi. 5.

THE happy time, my brethren, is nearly arrived, when the true and faithful disciples of the Lord will be prepared to lift up their heads, and to lay aside the weeds of mourning and sorrow, for the purpose of welcoming the King of Glory into their souls, with canticles of festivity and gladness. The time, in fact, is come, when the multitudes who go before, and the multitudes that follow, I mean, the immense multitudes of pious Christians throughout the world, who have walked with their Lord, during this holy time, in the paths of mortification and penance, are prepared to exclaim: *Hosanna to the Son of David: blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.* The time is come, when all the true

children of the Church are commanded to present themselves at the sacred banquet of the Lamb, and to receive their Lord and Saviour in the holy communion. Truly may this be called a time of triumph and exultation to the faithful servants of God. Welcome indeed to them is the announcement contained in my text : *Tell ye the daughter of Sion : Behold thy King cometh to thee.*—To the tepid and the habitual sinner, this time is a time of restraint, because it obliges them either to offer violence to their inclinations, and to prepare themselves for the sacraments, or be virtually excluded from the pale of the Church. But to the faithful soul it is a time of exultation and joy : it is a time, when they are disposed and prepared to run forward, and meet their Saviour with the warmest acclamations, and to welcome him into their breasts with the purest sentiments of gratitude and love. That these may be the sentiments of every individual here assembled, is my humble and fervent prayer.

The obligation of observing this time, and of solemnizing it by a participation of the flesh of the Lamb of God, either in figure, or in reality, has existed from the time that God formed to himself a chosen people, and established a particular form of worship. It may be said to be an indispensable part of religion itself. It was this which, in the times when it was originally instituted, distinguished the believer from the unbeliever, and preserved him from the power

of the destroying angel, as is related in the deliverance of the Israelites from the Egyptian slavery. By the observance of this rite, were the Jews separated from the rest of men, and acknowledged to be of the number of the chosen people of God. And by the continuance of the same observance were the children of the promise distinguished from all the other nations of the earth, and formed into a class totally distinct from the Gentiles.

The ordinances and commands of God in the old law, when the Paschal Lamb was eaten in figure of the flesh of the immaculate Lamb of God, are minute and expressive on this subject. *On the tenth day, said the Lord to Moses, (Exod. xii.) let every man take a lamb without blemish, a male of one year. . . .and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, and the whole multitude of the children of Israel shall sacrifice it in the evening. . . .and they shall eat the flesh that night, roasted at the fire, and unleavened bread, with wild lettuce. . . .And thus shall you eat it : you shall gird your loins, and you shall have shoes on your feet, holding staves in your hands ; and you shall eat it in haste : for it is the Phase (that is, the Passage) of the Lord. . . .And this shall be a memorial to you, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord in your generations, with an everlasting observance. . . .This is the service of the Phase (or Passover) : no foreigner shall eat of it. But every bought servant shall be circumcised, and so shall eat. The stran-*

ger and the hireling shall not eat thereof. . . . All the assembly of the children of Israel shall keep it. And if any stranger shall be willing to dwell among you, and to keep the Phase of the Lord, all his males shall first be circumcised, and then shall he celebrate it according to the manner; and he shall be as he that is born in the land: but if any man be uncircumcised, he shall not eat thereof.

In these minute and expressive terms was the perpetual observance of the Passover among the Jews, regulated and commanded by the Almighty himself. A lamb without blemish, (a type of the Lamb of God, in whom there was no sin,) was to be the victim. The whole of it was to be consumed, (as was to be the case when the Lamb of God was to give himself to be our food; *he that eateth me.* (John vi.) The people were to eat it in haste, and they were to be girt about the loins, with staves in their hands, like men prepared for a journey; expressive of the dispositions in which they ought to be, who partake of the flesh of the true Lamb of God, that is, alienated in affection from the place of their present exile, and determined to make the best of their way to their true country. No strangers, that is, no others than those, who were of the true church, were to partake of it: and it was to be a perpetual memorial to them of their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt: as the continuance of the unbloody sacrifice is a memorial of our deliverance from the bondage of sin, and is not partaken of by strangers, or

by those, who by their unbelief, are separated from the Church of the new law.

The ordinances of the old law were only types and figures of that which was to come. The shadow is passed away, and the substance has succeeded to its place. The obligation, therefore, of observing this time, so far from being taken away, is encreased. Our Lord came upon earth, not to destroy the law, but to accomplish it. (Matt. v.) He was the true Lamb of God : the paschal lamb of the Jews was only a figure of him. He came to deliver his chosen people from the bondage of sin and hell : the deliverance of the children of Israel from the bondage of Egypt was only a figure of this our redemption.—He came to prepare his faithful servants for their journey to the heavenly Jerusalem, the true land of promise, and to strengthen them by the participation of the unleavened bread of his own body, and the wild lettuce of self-denial and penance :—the preparing, and strengthening the Israelites for their journey to the land of Canaan, by means of the paschal lamb, and the unleavened bread, was only a figure of this. And the obligation, imposed on every disciple of Moses, of partaking of this lamb, was only a type of the obligation which is incumbent on every disciple of Jesus, to partake of the mystic sacrifice of the Lamb that was slain from the beginning of the world. So true it is, that our Lord came, not to destroy the law, but to accomplish it.

Accordingly we see, that, on the very day on which the Paschal Lamb was sacrificed by the Jews, he himself was offered up in sacrifice on the altar of the cross. On the evening preceding the festival of the Passover, the time appointed for the eating the Paschal Lamb, our Lord observed, with his apostles, this solemn rite according to the ancient forms. They all partook of the figurative lamb: and immediately after, our Lord substituted the Passover of the new law; and presented to them his own body and blood: *he took bread, blest, broke, and gave to them, saying: take and eat ye all of this, for this is my body.* And, in the same manner he presented to them the chalice, saying: *drink ye all of this, for this is my blood, of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many for the remission of sins.*—Thus did the Saviour of men usher in the sacrifice of the new law. Thus did he substitute the *true Lamb*, in the place of the *figurative lamb* given to the Jews. Thus did he substitute the *unleavened bread that came down from heaven*, in place of the *unleavened earthly bread*, which was taken by the Jews. Thus did the ancient rites resign their place to nobler elements of grace and love. Thus did the shadow give way to the substance.

The Christian Passover being instituted, the obligation of partaking of it at this time, was always supposed to continue, as under the old law. As it was said to the Jews: *this day shall*

be a memorial to you, and you shall keep it a feast to the Lord in your generations: so it is said to the disciples of the new law: *do this for a commemoration of me:* as much as to say: “This is your Passover for the time to come: this is the true Paschal Lamb: I have given you my own body and blood. Do not observe the ancient rites; but do as I have done, as a memorial of me.”

In obedience to this amiable precept, the Church of God, throughout the world, has always observed the Christian Passover with the greatest solemnity; and every disciple has always considered the obligation of partaking of the Pasch at this time, as binding as was the obligation imposed on the Jews, of partaking of their Passover.—The Church, indeed, did not enact a particular law on this subject, till the thirteenth century. A specific law was not made, until it was found necessary. The piety of the faithful had, in the preceding ages, led them to the observance of it; and it was only the tepidity and indolence of dissolute Christians, who neglected the sacraments wholly, which forced the Church to promulgate a law, by which all were obliged to receive the holy communion at this time, under a threat of being excommunicated from the society of the faithful during life, and of being deprived of christian burial after death.

Thus, my brethren, we see that, from the time that a visible Church on earth, with a

written form of worship, was established, the obligation of observing this time has always existed, and that the observance of this time has consisted principally in the participation of the flesh of the Lamb of God, either in figure, as under the old law, or in reality and substance, in spirit and truth, as under the new law—the law of grace and love.

Come then, my brethren, prepare yourselves for the Passover ; for this is truly the Passage of the Lord. Gird your loins, by repressing the desires of concupiscence and lust. Put shoes on your feet, by making resolutions to walk in the narrow path of virtue and perfection: and put staves into your hands, by expressing your desires to persevere in the fulfilment of all the duties of the gospel, and to journey on without ceasing, until you arrive at the land of promise.

The Jews celebrated their Passover with punctuality and gladness, from the time of its institution till the time of its abrogation. From the most distant parts they hastened to Jerusalem. They spared neither time, nor labour, nor expense. The happiness of partaking of the Passover, was an object superior in their minds to every other consideration. And shall it be said, that amongst Christians men are to be found, who turn away from the Passover of the new law? who refuse even to partake of it, when it is offered to them free cost? and who are willing rather to renounce their in-

heritance than be at any trouble in preparing themselves for it? Ah! if the Jews were so strict in the celebration of their Passover, which was nothing more than partaking of the flesh of a lamb, how strict would they have been, had their Passover been the true Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world! How will they rise up in judgment at the last day, and condemn the tepid languors of Christians, who, with superior inducements, neglect this solemn duty!

Was the doctrine of the Catholic Church the same as is preached by many of those who dissent from us:—was it our belief that the Christian Passover consisted of nothing more than bread and wine taken in remembrance, then a neglect on your parts, would not be a subject of astonishment. Such a Passover would be inferior to the Passover of the Jews; and the inducements to observe it, would be less than those which were held out to that rejected people. But our Passover is not in figure. It is the true Lamb: it is the true bread from heaven: it is the flesh of him, who said, *my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed*: it is the Lord himself, who said, *he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me.* (John vi.)—And shall there be one amongst you, who will prefer to be an alien—a stranger in the midst of his brethren, rather than put on the wedding garment, by a reform of life, and sincere repentance for

his past errors; and prefer the husks of swine, before the sweets of his Father's table ?

The privilege of partaking of this Passover, has always been the privilege of the members of the true Church : it has always been the birth-right, as it were, of the children of the Catholic Church. By this they have been distinguished, and separated from the children of error in every age, from the time of Moses. Strangers, as is recorded in the book of Exodus, were not allowed to partake of it, until they were associated to those, who were then the people of God, by circumcision. The ten tribes, who separated themselves from the Church of Jerusalem, and fell from the true faith, did not partake of it. —In the new law, they, who have separated themselves from the universal Church, do not partake of it as the true children of the promise : and in these latter times, it may be said that the disciples of the innumerable sects, which a pretended reformation has produced, do not partake of it at all ; for one of their chief errors is a denial of the real presence in the holy sacrament, and consequently a denial of a Christian Passover.

Truly, my brethren, the worthy partaking of this holy Pasch, has always been the exclusive privilege of the members of the true Church—of the Jews, in figure, under the old law, and of the members of the Catholic Church, in substance, under the new.—How happy, then,

ought you to account yourselves, who are members of this Church, in the enjoyment of this inestimable treasure! How many thousands are there, now separated from the centre of Catholic unity, through the fault of their forefathers, who would run to the sacred table, with hearts overflowing with love and gratitude, were their prejudices removed, and their eyes opened to behold the light of truth, in the same manner as yours are! How would they rejoice to see your day!

During the space of more than three thousand years, the Pasch has been eaten by the faithful at this time. Do you, my brethren, join yourselves to the people of God, and sit down to his table with a holy hunger and thirst after this spiritual food. You stand in need of refreshment: for you have yet a great way to go, before you arrive at the land of promise. Perhaps you are not yet liberated from the bondage of Egypt—the *slavery of sin*:—at all events, you are pursued by your mortal enemy, the prince of darkness, and are in danger of falling into his hands. It is the flesh and blood of the Lamb, that is to protect you from danger, and effect your deliverance. Have recourse to it, therefore, with confidence and joy.

You are journeying through the desert of this world, where you have numberless difficulties and obstacles to surmount, numberless trials and afflictions to endure, numberless snares and precipices to avoid. The flesh of the Lamb,

your Passover, is to strengthen you, to encounter and overcome them all. Hasten, therefore, to the banquet, with gratitude and love.

You are desirous of arriving at the land of promise—the heavenly Jerusalem. The body and blood of the Lamb is to conduct you to it. Let no consideration, therefore, keep you from the sacred table. As you value your salvation, be earnest, be zealous, be attentive in the observance of these holy rites. What greater blessing could you wish for? What greater happiness could you enjoy? What more could the Almighty do for you than what he has done? He gives you *bread from heaven*; and *this bread is his flesh for the life of the world, of which whoever eats, shall live eternally*. He stretches out his hand to you, and says: *take ye and eat, for this is my body: take ye and drink, for this is my blood*.—Oh! my brethren, into what excellent pastures has he brought us!

Prepare yourselves, therefore, for the celebration of these holy mysteries. *Tell ye the daughter of Sion, behold thy King cometh*. Yes: your King, even the King of kings, is coming to you. Run forward to meet him. Welcome his arrival. Salute him in the words of the Hebrews: *Hosanna to the Son of David: blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord*.

The Church, on this day, puts palm branches into your hands, to remind you of the palms which the Hebrews strewed before our Lord, on his entrance into Jerusalem, which was on this

day. Receive them with reverence, and as pledges, on your part, of your determination to go forth, and meet your Jesus at this time, and to welcome him into your souls.—Oh! at the conclusion of this season, how different will be the feelings of the pious Christian, who has prepared himself for the coming of his Lord, and received him with due dispositions, from the feelings of those, who are wedded to the world,—who have preferred the flesh-pots of Egypt, before the sweetmeats of his table,—who have renounced their birth-right, and have refused to partake of the Passover; and by so doing, have exposed themselves to the dreadful sentence of exclusion from the pale of the Church, and to the danger of an eternal separation from the society of the faithful in the bosom of the Divinity.—Oh! may none of you, my brethren, experience the feelings of uneasiness, anxiety, and remorse, which are the offspring of this tepidity and neglect. On the contrary, may the pastures, which the good shepherd has provided, be your pastures. May you be united to your Jesus, here on earth; and may you, by a due correspondence with the graces, which such an union will procure for you, be made worthy to be united with him hereafter, in the pastures of eternal bliss, in the heavenly Jerusalem.

GOOD FRIDAY.

ON KISSING THE CROSS.

ON this day is performed the ceremony of kneeling before the crucifix, and kissing it. To Catholics, instructions on this subject are not necessary. They know the meaning of it, and the spirit with which it ought to be performed.—But, our places of worship are public, and curiosity draws many of our separated brethren to inspect our ceremonies. To these, an explanation will be necessary. For, as they have no other knowledge of the principles of our faith, than what they have derived from prejudice and falsehood, this ceremony will contribute to confirm their erroneous ideas, unless a full and candid explanation be given of the motives why it is performed. For them, therefore, the following remarks are intended: and as charity obliges us to presume that truth will be more agreeable to them than falsehood, I hope that they will attend to the following explanation, impartially and without prejudice, and form a decision upon it, in their own minds, according to the strict rules of candour and sincerity.

The innocency or criminality of the religious ceremonies, which are observed by those of a different communion, with whose doctrines you are not perfectly acquainted, is to be ascertained not from what appears externally, but from the interior dispositions of the heart. Thus, the act of kneeling and kissing a crucifix, although it may appear externally as an act of adoration, is not in reality such, unless the inward disposition of the heart leads the person to adore the object before him, as a fit object of adoration. If there be not this inward disposition of the heart, a person may kneel before, and kiss any thing that he pleases, and no adoration whatever, such at least as ought to be paid to God, can with justice be attributed to him. External actions, such as bowing, kneeling, or kissing, are not of themselves acts of adoration : they are testimonies only of respect and love. An inferior bows to his superior, but he does not adore him. A child kneels before his parent to ask his blessing, and by this act testifies his respect : a child kisses its parent, and thus testifies its love. These external actions, therefore, of themselves are innocent.

But, are they, or can they be innocent, when the object before us is an inanimate object, a mere representation of the real object of our esteem, respect, veneration, or adoration ? Certainly they may ; and innumerable circumstances from common life, prove that they may. The

peers of the realm bow to the throne in the House of Lords, although the king be not seated in it : and by that act, they merely show their respect and submission to the sovereign.

—A mother, who has been long, or is for ever, in this world, separated from a darling child, may, without crime, embrace its picture, or any thing that reminded her of it,—may weep over it,—kiss it,—and keep it with the greatest care. These would be the actions of a tender mother : and we should admire her love.

We should say, that she proved herself, according to nature, a mother indeed.—There are enthusiastic admirers of the great men of the world,—of men, who are mortal beings like themselves, who in their enthusiasm would not hesitate to kneel down before their statue or picture, merely because they had made themselves eminent by their victories, their political talents, or because they were pursuing an object, which their admirers eagerly wish to be accomplished, and would themselves accomplish, had they abilities and power. And what would this prove? not that they considered that the picture or statue was the real man : but that they were enthusiastic admirers of the man himself.

The same may be done by Christians. They may testify their respectful submission to their supreme Lord, by bowing, as it were, to his throne : they may, as the Royal Prophet expresses it, *enter into his tabernacle, and adore in*

the place where his feet have stood; (Ps. cxxxi.) and yet be guilty of no act of idolatry.

Christians may likewise very innocently weep over, embrace, and kiss the image or picture of him whom they love. In fact, with what reason can any one attribute guilt to the pious Christian, who expresses his affection by those outward testimonies, for the God who made him, for the God who redeemed him, for the God, who is his first beginning and last end—for the God, who is much more to him than a child to its parent, or a parent to its child? He knows what it is that is placed before his eyes: he knows that it has neither life nor sense: that it is composed of earthly substance; that it is the work of man's hands; and that it can neither see, nor hear, nor help him. But it reminds him of his Beloved: it is his picture or image: it reminds him of the sufferings he endured for him on the cross: it reminds him of his infinite love for lost man. And with these sentiments in our minds, may we not kiss, may we not weep over the representation of our suffering Jesus, in as innocent a manner, as a parent over the picture of a darling child?

But, Protestants will say, why bow down, or kneel before such inanimate things? is not this an act of adoration? No, certainly: unless a person does it with the intention of adoration. As the person who, out of respect and admiration, kneels before the statue of his beloved hero, without any charge of idolatry, so like-

wise may the Christian bow, and kneel before the image or statue of the object of his admiration, without any charge of the kind being brought against him. The object of his admiration is a God-man, the conqueror of sin and death,—the author of his faith, and the finisher of his hope,—the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. And may not he express his veneration for so sublime an object, in the same manner as one worldly man will do for another? The worldling, in admiring his hero, and reverencing his statue or picture, acts according to his political principles. The Christian acts according to the principles of a Christian: and as those principles are such, which every human being ought to maintain, his actions are praiseworthy, and right.—But why express our admiration by kneeling before such images? In the first place, the act of kneeling is not out of respect to the inanimate object before us, but to the great Being, whom it is intended to represent. In the second place, as that great Being is so infinitely superior to us, too great respect cannot be shown to him, nor to any thing that recalls him to our mind.—But, what authority have we for such external reverence to inanimate things? The authority of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, St. Paul:—at the name of Jesus, he says, (Phil. ii.) every knee shall bow, of those who are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. If then, at the name of Jesus, which is a mere sound, every creature is com-

manded to bow the knee, merely because it conveys to our minds, the idea of our Lord and Saviour, with greater reason may the same reverence be paid to representations, which convey that idea in a stronger light.—Oh! happy would it be for this nation, were the spirit of censure, of opposition, and of prejudice banished from the land. All these observances would then be seen in their true light: and all people would acknowledge that this embracing and kneeling were nothing more than expressions of the internal sentiments which the heart entertained for him, whom alone we adore. All people would acknowledge that, to treat with disrespect and contempt either the name of God, or the image which represented to us his infinite goodness and love, would be an act of disrespect, and contempt shown to God himself; and all people would acknowledge that, to respect either the name of God, or the image of his sufferings, is, in fact, a testimony of respect shown to God himself, and an act of true piety and religion.

You, therefore, of my present auditory, who acknowledge the reasonableness of this ceremony, prepare to perform it with due respect and love. Be not ashamed of the cross of Christ. Let not the sneers of the ignorant, nor the scoffs of the unwise, have any weight with you. Your religion is your glory and your happiness, and shall the prejudices and misunderstandings of others cause you to turn away from

it ? Although there may be some who will not listen to explanations, sound reasoning, or even to common sense,—although there may be some who are resolved to believe that a thing is wrong, merely because they have always supposed that it was so, do you leave them to their conceits, and attend to your own concerns. You will not be answerable for their errors, or for their prejudices.—Come, then, my brethren, open your hearts to the fondest sentiments of love. Raise up your thoughts to the God who made you. Reflect on the infinite excess of his love for lost man. This was the day of his sufferings and death. This was the day of his triumph over sin and hell. This was the day of your redemption. Meditate on the excruciating tortures which he endured for you on the cross. Imagine to yourselves, that you behold the streams of blood flowing from his wounds. Enter into his heart, and contemplate in spirit the love which burns there for you. The image of the crucifix reminds you of these things. Embrace it then with respect and love :—embrace it, because it is the representation of your Jesus suffering and dying for you :—embrace it with a truly christian spirit.

Although it may be said, that this ceremony is not imposed as a duty ; yet to refuse to perform it, argues either a spirit of concealed pride, or a want of true piety. To refuse to perform it, through fear of what others may say, or be-

cause there were people present, who are disposed to blaspheme what they do not, and will not understand, and who, in the literal sense, may be called enemies of the cross of Christ, would be an acknowledgment that you were ashamed of the observances of your religion.

—To refuse to perform it, because you did not feel any relish for it, would be an acknowledgment that you were deficient in gratitude and love.—And to refuse to perform it, because you did not approve of it, would be passing a censure upon the whole Christian Church, and proudly setting up your opinion against the most eminent, the most learned, the most pious men, that Christianity has produced.—

But, I trust that there are none of this description amongst you. Be animated, therefore, with love, and accompany me with fervour and devotion through this interesting and solemn service: and may you be made partakers of the blessings, which your Saviour purchased for you on the cross.

L. D. S.

GOOD FRIDAY.

ON THE PASSION.

*Jesus said : It is consummated. And bowing down his head, he gave up the ghost.....*JOHN xix. 30.

THESE, my brethren, were the last words of our expiring Lord : *It is consummated* : and bowing down his head, in submission to the will of his Father, he gave up the ghost.—Oh ! what a field, my brethren, is here opened to us for reflection !—Who is this Jesus ? What is the meaning of this his last declaration ? Why is he reduced to this state ? This Jesus is the eternal Son of the living God, made man for the love of us, and to save us from the never-ending torments of the bottomless abyss. His words declare that he humbled himself to the death of the cross for our sins ; that no less a sacrifice was necessary in order to satisfy the injured justice of his Father ; and that now the great work of our re-

demption is consummated.—Oh ! here are copious subjects for our meditation ! here are more than sufficient motives to excite in our minds the most lively sentiments both of joy and sorrow.

You are now assembled together, my brethren, for the purpose of commemorating the passion and death of your Redeemer. You are assembled for the express purpose of testifying your gratitude to your agonizing Jesus, of expressing your sorrow for the share which your sins had in this mournful tragedy, and of giving security for your fidelity to the commands of God for the time to come.

These are the objects of this solemn commemoration, which has been enjoined to be observed on this day, as an eternal remembrance of the love of our Lord and Saviour towards sinful man : and these are the motives, which have caused you to assemble together in this place. Meditate on them, and infix them deeply in your souls ; praying fervently that the impression may not be of short duration, but permanent—permanent even to the last moment of your lives.

The Jesus, who suffered for you on this day, is your Lord and your God. He is the second Person of the adorable Trinity,—the Word, by whom all things were made, and who himself *was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us*. The Jesus, who, on this day, was crucified, is the only begotten Son of the Father, the eternal, the

omnipotent, the incomprehensible God of heaven and earth ; before whom the whole host of heavenly spirits, the most potent angels and archangels, cherubin and seraphim, fall down on their faces :—before whom the mountains melt away as wax, and the pillars of heaven are shaken. This Jesus is he, who, although he appeared amongst men as a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity, will come at the last day, accompanied with many legions of angels, to render to every man according to his works :—it is he, who will summon you, every individual amongst you, to appear before him, and will pronounce over you the awful sentence either of salvation, or of eternal reprobation :—in a word, it is he, on whose love or hatred depends your all for a never-ending eternity.

What a spectacle, to behold the Author of nature, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, reduced to this state of humiliation and torture ! If we have any spiritual feelings remaining in us, what an affecting spectacle, to behold our Friend, our Benefactor, our Father, our Saviour, our God, and our Judge, expiring in the midst of torments the most excruciating, and giving up the ghost !—The spectacle is truly awful. It made an impression even on inanimate nature,—the sun became darkened,—the moon red as blood,—the earth itself trembled. And shall it be said, that rational man alone can view these things, and be unmoved ?

It is not my intention to enumerate the mul-

titude and variety of the sufferings of this God-man for your salvation. I shall not make it my object, on this occasion, to rouse your feelings, and excite your sympathising tears, by describing his agonizing pains. I have another object in view—an object of higher importance;—the same object which your Lord had in view, when he humbled himself to the death of the cross.—It is, to call your attention to the causes of these his humiliations, and induce you to fix your thoughts, not so much on him, as on yourselves.

Why did your Saviour suffer? It was for you. It was on your account that he sweat blood, that he was despised, and reviled, and scourged, and crowned with thorns, and nailed to the cross. It was for you that he sighed, and wept, and bled, and gave up the ghost. This was love indeed. *Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* (John xv.) Nevertheless, your Lord and your God was led to the slaughter like a lamb, for your sakes, without opening his mouth. (Isa. liii.) But why testify his love for you by suffering and dying? Because you were under sentence of death on account of your sins, and no other but the God-man could reverse that sentence, by bearing himself your iniquities on the cross.—How enormous, therefore, must be the guilt of sin, which could not be expiated by the love of a God, unless accompanied with such excessive sufferings! O let it be the

subject of your pious thoughts, my brethren, every day, and every hour of your lives. Frequently run to the cross, and contemplate the handy-work of your sins. Look upon the face of your crucified Christ, and say: "These are the effects of my pride, my voluptuousness, my tepidity, and my sloth: these are the effects of my hatreds, animosities, and slanders: these are the effects of my multiplied crimes and enormities.

My brethren, were any of us called to the bedside of a friend, who was labouring under the most excruciating tortures, who was weeping, groaning, and dying, and who was reduced to that state merely by his endeavours to save us from ruin, what would be our feelings? And, did we know at the same time, that it was owing to our thoughtless neglect, or criminal depravity, that these sufferings were brought upon him, would it not be almost more than human nature could endure? Ah! we have all of us hearts of flesh: we are all susceptible of the finer feelings of compassion, however hardened we may be in other respects. If, then, we could not endure, without feeling, the sight of a fellow-creature struggling in the pangs of death on our account, what ought to be our sensations, our feelings, when we behold our only friend, our only parent, our Lord and our God, in the extremity of torture? What ought to be our feelings at the sight of the drops of blood, which issued from every pore of his body, through

excess of solicitude and love for us?—at the sight of his innocent flesh torn with whips and scourges?—at the sight of his adorable head crowned with a wreath of sharp thorns, whose points are piercing deep on every side?—at the sight of his more than angelic countenance, disfigured with blows and buffets, and defiled with disgusting phlegm?—at the sight of his hands and feet, bored with nails, and fastened to the cross?—at the sight of his whole body, disjointed in every part, and hanging extended in the air, supported only by the nails, which confine it to the hard bed, on which he is offering himself up as a victim for our sins? Oh! what ought to be our feelings at such a sight? Nevertheless, this is the sight, which you are assembled together on this day to witness, not indeed in the bloody manner, in which it was once endured, but to witness with the eyes of faith, as if it was actually present before you.

Oh! my brethren, give full scope to your feelings; but let it not be the mere feelings of compassion, let it be the feelings of love, the feelings of sincere sorrow for your offences, which have been the cause of these his sufferings, the feelings of sincere repentance, and hatred of sin. These are the feelings, which I exhort you to encourage: the feelings of compassion will profit you little, without the feelings of repentance.

It is true, your Saviour does not actually suffer at this time. His sufferings are at an end,

and he has entered into his glory. He will not suffer, or die any more. But you have not less reason, on that account, to indulge the feelings of sorrow for your sins, and of love for his infinite goodness. The words, which he addressed to the pious women, as he was proceeding to the place, bleeding under the heavy load of the cross, are particularly applicable to you, and will be particularly applicable to every sinner till the end of time:—they are words, which are of more serious importance to you, in a practical point of view, than all the rest of this tragical scene. *Daughters of Jerusalem*, said he, *weep not over me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For behold the days shall come, wherein they will say: Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that have not borne, and the paps that have not given suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall upon us: and to the hills, Cover us. For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?*—As much as to say: “Weep not on account of my sufferings: but weep for your own sins, and for the sins which, through your example or negligence, your children may commit, and for which you will be accountable. For the judgments, which you see falling upon me, are not to be compared with the judgments which shall, ere long, fall upon the children of men. I am innocence itself: I am like green wood, unfit material for a fire. Men are sinners. The wrath of God is enkindled against them: it

will quickly seize on the dry wood, hay, and stubble, which they have gathered together, and terrible will be the conflagration. *If in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?*" (Luke xxiii.)—Truly, my brethren, these words deserve your most serious consideration. You, who go on, adding daily sin to sin :—you, who are continually encreasing the treasure of wrath against the day of wrath, never repenting as you ought to do, and never amending, what prospect have you before your eyes? Is it possible that you can delude yourselves with the idea of escaping the judgments of the Almighty? Can you imagine that the sufferings of the innocent will exempt the guilty from sufferings? or that, on account of the green wood burning with such fury, the dry wood may expect to pass through the crucible without any combustion at all? Alas? vain are such delusions. For, if the vengeance of God burst with such fury on the head of Him, who was his beloved Son, and in whom he was always well pleased, it will burst with ten-fold vengeance on you, unless averted by the sorrows of sincere repentance, and the fervour of sincere amendment. It will burst with ten-fold vengeance on your children, unless they walk in the paths of virtue.

You know not what is hanging over your heads. The pious women, amongst whom was our Blessed Lady herself, and of the others, there were some whose children were of the

number of the apostles and disciples, were admonished to weep for themselves, and for their children, and were compared, notwithstanding their piety, to *dry wood* ready for the fire. If such an admonition and declaration were applicable to them, what threats are applicable to you? What have you to expect? I reckon myself along with you: what have we to expect? Can we reasonably look for mercy and forgiveness, without condign works of repentance? We are conscious of many sins, and perhaps sins of great enormity: even the most perfect amongst us know not whether we are worthy of love or hatred: and **can** we expect that all our rebellions will be consigned to oblivion, and that the fire will never reach us? Had we inflicted on our guilty flesh such punishment as it deserved, by voluntary works of mortification: had we crucified it, as we ought to have done, with its vices and concupiscences, and made full satisfaction to the justice of God, we might have entertained a reasonable hope that we should have escaped. But who can flatter himself that he has done all that ought to be done? Who can flatter himself that he has done one half of what is, and will be required of him? Who can flatter himself that he has not been adding to, instead of diminishing, the treasure of wrath that was against him? Let us not deceive ourselves in a business of this importance: too much depends upon it. Let us remember, that we are not exempted from suffering, merely

because Christ has suffered for us. He suffered, leaving us an example, that we should walk in his footsteps :—he suffered, for the purpose of encouraging us to suffer :—he suffered, for the purpose of stamping a value on our sufferings, and of rendering them capable of atoning to the justice of his Father, injured by our sins :—he suffered for us, in order that we, by suffering with him, might be found worthy to rise with him.

Let us not, therefore, deceive ourselves, my brethren. We are like dry wood, fit materials for the wrath of God. We deserve severe punishment: and severe punishment we must have, in proportion to our guilt, either in this world, or in the next. There is no exception of persons with God. Justice must, and will be done, either here or hereafter. Penance must be done, and satisfaction made, or judgment without mercy will take place.

Oh! think of this, you who run thoughtlessly into the excesses of drunkenness or lust,—you, who make little account of swearing, cursing, or defaming your neighbour,—you, who without scruple incur the guilt of lies, dishonesty, or oppression,—you, who think of making no other atonement for the transgressions of which you have been guilty, but that of a few prayers, and a superficial acknowledgment of your crimes :—think of this, I say, and consider that a severe debt of atonement must be paid for every one of these your crimes;—and that, if

it be not paid voluntarily in this world, it will be exacted with double severity in the next world, even to the last farthing. The justice of God is not to be mocked : it will have satisfaction. Your pleasure in the commission of sin was momentary, and for that reason, more inexcusable, because it was giving the preference to a momentary gratification before the love and friendship of God, which is eternal. Reason was given to you, for the purpose of discerning what was good for you in reality, and what was good only in appearance : and if you do not make use of that reason, and follow its directions in preferring that which is eternal, before that which is only for a time, the justice of God is entitled to inflict upon you long sufferings in this world, and, unless you enter into sincere sentiments of repentance, eternal punishments in the next. Let these words, therefore, sink deep into your minds, and frequently meditate upon them, *if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry ?*

These, undoubtedly, are serious subjects for your consideration : but they are not devoid of consolation. Now that your Saviour has suffered for you, you are assured that your sufferings will be available to salvation, if you endure them with Christian patience. You know that every self-denial, every act of submission to insult or contradiction, every pang either of body or mind patiently endured for the love of

God, will be sanctified by the blood of your Redeemer, and made acceptable in his sight.

Had he not shed his blood for you, you would have been without hope. You never could have done any thing that would have been meritorious before him. You would have suffered here the usual sufferings of mankind; and you would inevitably have suffered hereafter for all eternity. Nothing could have saved you.— But, now that your Blessed Lord has suffered the torments of his passion, now that he has purchased the means of your ransom at the price of his precious blood, you have the assurance, that, if you enter seriously into the ways of repentance, if you submit voluntarily and patiently to the crosses, which he may be pleased to lay on your shoulders, and if you voluntarily chastise yourselves and reduce your bodies into subjection, you have the assurance, I say, that all will find acceptance with God, through the merits of your Saviour's sufferings, and purchase for you an eternal weight of glory. *Rejoice* then, my Christian brethren: I say to you again with St. Paul, *rejoice*. (Gal. iv.) Although you are here assembled to commemorate the most mournful event that ever took place from the beginning of the world, I say, *exult and be glad*. Your Saviour *has suffered, and has entered into his glory. He cannot die, or suffer any more.* It is now *consummated*. All is done for you, that is necessary to be done on the part of your Lord and Saviour, in order to

open to you a free admission into the mansions of eternal bliss. Nothing is wanting but a due correspondence on your parts. Although you may have contracted debts to an immense amount, although you may have run on, year after year, in the career of vice, and heaped up to yourselves treasures of wrath, yet every thing is consummated on the part of God that is required to avert the anger of his indignation, and to effect your reconciliation with him. All that is wanting is true, and sincere repentance on your parts, and a thorough amendment of life for the time to come.

Look up, therefore, to your God. Look up to your Lord and Saviour hanging on the cross, and expiring under the weight of your iniquities. Look up, and behold the excess of his love—the enormity of your sins—the value of your ransom—and the price of your salvation. Although the breath of an angry God may enkindle in you the fire of his vengeance, be not alarmed. Your sufferings will be only for a time: and these sufferings will be available to your eternal happiness through the sufferings of your Saviour. Be not afraid of suffering too much. Your deserts are infinitely greater than your punishment will be. The flames of hell are your due: and what are temporary punishments when compared with these?

Offer your shoulders, therefore, freely and sincerely to the cross of Christ. Accept, with

meekness and submission, the sufferings, which he is pleased to impose on you, whether they arise from pains of body or decay of health,—whether from adversity, or loss of property,—whether from contradictions, affronts, ill-treatment, defamation, calumny, or the like,—in a word, submit to all trials, of whatever kind they may be; recollecting that your Saviour suffered for you a great deal more, leaving you an example, that you should walk in his footsteps.

Be not disheartened if tribulations press heavy upon you. Recollect that nothing befalls you but by the pleasure or permission of God: and that, if he chastise you severely, he nevertheless chastises as a tender Father; he chastises, because his infinite justice (an attribute as essential to him as his infinite mercy) requires it for your welfare.—Submit, therefore, willingly and cheerfully, to the cross which is allotted for you. Look up to your agonizing Lord, and suffer with resignation and thanksgiving. Be glad and rejoice that he is ready to accept of your poor offering, and that by present sufferings you may escape the eternal torments, which your sins have deserved. Enter into the most sincere sentiments of repentance. Correct all your failings. Crucify your flesh with its vices and concupiscences. Be sincere lovers of God, and followers of every virtue.—Then, although your sins may have excited the wrath of his indignation, you will avert his judgments,

and obtain a blessing, instead of a curse.—
Then, in the same manner as he said on the cross : *it is consummated*: namely, that all was done, which was necessary to be done on his part, for the salvation of your souls, he will say, that all is done, which is necessary to be done on your parts ; and that the possession of the crown, which he has purchased for you by his precious blood, shall be your inheritance for endless ages.

EASTER SUNDAY.

ON THE NEWNESS OF LIFE.

Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new paste, as you are unleavened. For Christ, our Pasch, is sacrificed. 1 COR. v. 7.

THESE are words, my brethren, which, with the apostle, I address to you on this joyful solemnity. *Purge out the old leaven, that you may become a new paste, as you are unleavened.* Banish far from you the old leaven of concupiscence. Banish far from you that triple concupiscence, which St. Paul calls, *the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life.* Divest yourselves of the corruption of depraved nature. Become new men : *for Christ, your Pasch, is sacrificed.*

The whole of this sentence of the apostle is a beautiful and expressive similitude. The whole race of mankind, by the sin of our first parents, and by the transgressions of their descendants had been vitiated, like flour which

had been caused to ferment by noxious leaven. The means of removing this noxious leaven are prepared for us by the sacrifice of Christ, our Saviour. By his death on the cross, he has purchased our redemption. He has *blotted out the hand-writing that was against us*. (Col. ii.) He has put it into our power to effect our reconciliation with our offended God, and to live henceforward in a manner that will ensure to us the possession of that eternal kingdom, from which we had been secluded by the sin of our first parents.

A concurrence, therefore, with the grace and blessings of God, is required on our parts. All is not done, which is required to be done for our salvation, merely because Christ, our Pasch, is sacrificed. This is pointed out to us in the words of my text, *Purge out the old leaven*, says St. Paul. He does not say that the old leaven is purged out; but he exhorts us to correspond with the means provided by the sacrifice of our Pasch, to purge it out by a perfect renovation of life, by sincere repentance for the past, and by the pursuance of good works for the time to come. I will address a few words of consolation, in this discourse, to those who have been labouring in this great and glorious cause, during the late penitential season. How many there may be of this description, I know not. This I may say, that there are not so many as my solicitude for the salvation of every individual amongst you, prompts me to

desire.—In the second place, I will suggest a few reflections of the most serious importance to those, and I hope the number is small, who have suffered this time to pass over, without making one single effort, either to extricate themselves from the slavery of their evil propensities, or to satisfy the justice of God for their past sins.

On this joyful day—on this, the greatest solemnity of the year, I hope I may indulge the pleasing idea, that I am addressing myself to an assembly, the great majority of which is prepared to celebrate it with the same spiritual gladness, and to sound forth the same heartfelt canticles and alleluias of praise and adoration, as were the Christians of the first ages.—On this supposition, I say, *rejoice and be glad*. Fold up the weeds of penitential attire, and clothe yourselves with the robes of joy and festivity ; *for Christ, your Pasch, is sacrificed*. The storms and the winds are passed. The sun is risen. The clouds are dispersed. The billows are subsided : arise and come. Come and join in the canticles of spiritual mirth, which, at this time, are sounded forth by the true sons of God, in every nation of the universe. Let no earthly motives, no sensual considerations, find place in your minds. Rejoice not on account of flesh and blood. Exult not, because the flesh-pots of Egypt will be again laid before you. Let your joy be spiritual ; let it be pure ; let it be unmixed with any base alloy—with

any thing that is not worthy of the true and faithful follower of the crucified Jesus.

Christ, your Pasch, is sacrificed. Your redemption is completed. The gates of the eternal Sion are thrown open before you. These are the only subjects worthy of your joy. These are the sublime objects, which ought to fill your souls with festivity and gladness. These ought to call forth the canticles of gratitude and love, and overwhelm your souls with the purest spiritual delights. *Christ, your Pasch, is sacrificed.*—Christians as you are, the things which appertain to Christ, are your crown and your glory. He has suffered for your sins: you have suffered with him. He has shed his blood for you: you have wept over him: you have lamented the share which your sins had in crucifying him: you have entered into sincere sentiments of sorrow for them: you have renounced them for ever. He is now risen again, glorious, and triumphant, and immortal. He has effected your redemption. He has presented your tears of repentance to his eternal Father. He has sanctified your sufferings. He has effected your reconciliation with your offended God. He has admitted you into the number of his brethren; and has enrolled your names in the book of life, as co-heirs with him in the inheritance of all the riches and treasures of his eternal kingdom.

Rejoice then, I say: again, I say, rejoice. Look up to the heavens, and behold the crown

of never fading glory, which is prepared for you. Penetrate, likewise, with the eyes of faith, the unfathomable abyss, and behold the rage, the envy, the disappointed madness of your infernal enemies, on your being chosen to fill the seats in the eternal Sion, which they have forfeited. But, above all, look up to your Deliverer—your Saviour. Look up to him with gratitude and love. Look up to him as the head of that mystical body, of which you are members. Reflect on the dignity to which you are raised; and be prepared to sacrifice health, wealth, and even the whole world itself, were it at your disposal, rather than fall away from the high station to which you are exalted.

Christ, your Pasch, is sacrificed. Oh! my brethren, what have you to do with this wretched world! or why should you be over solicitous about it! Another world is opened before you, where happiness is permanent, and where joy is eternal. There let your hearts be fixed. There let your affections be centered. Although, perhaps, your pilgrimage may be prolonged for a few years; although you may meet with many thorns and briars in the road; although you may be exposed to many difficulties and much labours, have your eyes fixed on Jesus. He has trod the path before you. He has traced the way with his precious blood. He has suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should walk in his footsteps.—Although temptations may assail you;—although

the enemies of your souls, the devil, the world, and the flesh, may gather round you, and threaten to drag you out of the road, in order to hurry you down the precipice of sin and perdition: be not afraid. Your Jesus will be with you. He will strengthen you with his grace, and will give you the victory over them all. Persevere in your resolutions. Continue to encrease in the love of God: continue to advance in the ways of goodness and piety: and you may confidently rely upon the assurance of the Spirit of truth, that, if you suffer with Christ, you will hereafter reign with him in glory.

But, my brethren, are these consoling reflections applicable to all? May we entertain the hope that every one here present has accompanied his Lord and Master in the hard ways of the cross? has done penance for his sins? and is now risen to a life of holiness and justice? Alas! there is too much reason to fear, that there are numbers amongst you, who have not even attempted to purge out the old leaven; who are the same now, as they were before this penitential time commenced; who have brought forth no fruits, and who, consequently, are entitled to no reward. To these, what words of consolation can I give? Am I authorized to say to them: *rejoice, because your redemption is at hand?* No, my unfortunate brethren, whoever you may be, consolation is not your due. The words of the Baptist only are applicable to you: *do penance, for the kingdom of God is at hand.* (Matt. iii.) Even on this joyful solem-

nity, it is my duty to preach up penance to you, to exhort you to weep and lament over your manifold iniquities, to chastise your flesh, and reduce it into subjection, to renounce the error of your ways, and to begin without delay, a life of holiness and justice. Judgments are hanging over your heads, and ere long they will fall on you, and crush you under their weight. You have seen the terrible effects of the justice of God upon him, who was innocence itself,—upon him who was the Beloved Son of God, in whom he was always well pleased. And what can you expect, after all your rebellions, if you continue in the ways of sin? Can you flatter yourselves that the arm of Almighty vengeance will long be restrained? Can you go heedlessly on, as if no danger was at hand? Oh! you have no security for one instant. The fire of divine justice may be enkindled in you at a moment's notice: and then, what a terrible conflagration may you not expect?—Penance, therefore, is your due: and penance without delay, is your only security.

My advice, probably, will sound harsh in the ears of these worldly, these impenitent Christians. Of all others, they have been looking forward most anxiously for the conclusion of Lent, and are most rejoiced that the time is now come, when fewer restraints will be laid on their sensual appetite. My advice, therefore, will not be very acceptable. And yet, what other advice can I give? They have not broken

their bonds asunder; and how can I say, rejoice, for that you are free? They have not done condign works of penance; and how can I say, fold up the weeds of penitential attire, and clothe yourselves with the robes of gladness? They are not risen with Christ to a life of holiness and justice: and how can I say, look up to the crown which is prepared for you?

In the primitive ages of the Church, the unhappy Christian, who had transgressed against the laws of God, was eager to enter upon a course of penance. His dread of being suddenly called before the tribunal of God, caused him to hasten to his minister without delay, and solicit to be admitted into the number of penitents. No sooner was his prayer heard, than he submitted to fasting, as an essential ingredient of repentance:—to the mortifications of the flesh, as the most efficacious means of purging out the old leaven, and reducing the body into the subjection of the spirit. The fasts, and abstinences, to which he cheerfully submitted, were of the utmost rigour, and not confined merely to the forty days of Lent, but to protracted periods, and, probably, for lesser crimes than some of you have committed, who, in these times, seek for a dispensation, or dispense yourselves, without permission, from every thing which is repugnant to the feelings of your sensual appetite. He did not listen to the plaintive sighs of self-

love, when it whispered to him: "Oh! you cannot fast—you cannot abstain for many days together—your constitution is weak—your work is hard—you have much walking about—you must adopt a milder course. God does not expect so much from you as he does from those who have no worldly business to attend to." No: he listened not to suggestions of this kind. He was in earnest in the great affair of salvation. He was as solicitous for his soul, as Christians, now-a-days, are for their bodies. He thought as little of injuring his constitution by the rigours of penance, as Christians, in these times, do of injuring their constitution by intemperance, or by excess, either in hard labour, or in worldly anxiety and solicitude. He was as perfect in the ways of God, as Christians, now-a-days, are in the ways of the world. —This was the disposition, and this was the conduct of penitents in the early ages of the Church: and this must be the conduct and disposition of every penitent in every age.

Oh! my brethren, be not deceived. With God there is no exception of persons. You never will be exempted from that, which has always been exacted from sinners, by Divine justice. You must do penance, or you will not escape the wrath which is to come. For, our Saviour positively declares, that *unless you do penance, you shall all perish.* (Luke xiii.)

Begin, therefore, without delay. Although this is a time of festivity, your eternal good

requires that you put on the garments of mourning, and begin the great work of atonement, before it is too late. Let not the desires of gratifying your appetite, cause you to defer it. Be not like those men, of whom St. Paul speaks, *who make a God of their belly, who glory in their shame, who mind earthly things*: (Phil. iii.) but, as the same Apostle says, *mortify your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is the serving of idols, put you all away, for which things sake, the wrath of God cometh upon the children of unbelief.* (Col. iii.)—Oh! my brethren, sell not your inheritance for a mess of pottage. Let not the flesh-pots of Egypt be the great object of your desires, lest you fall under the judgments of God inflicted on the gluttonous Israelites. You were formed for nobler purposes. You were formed for an union with your God. Take off your affections, therefore, from these perishable things, and fix them upon those, which are invisible, and eternal. Turn away your thoughts from this miserable earth, and *have your conversation in heaven.* (Phil. iii.)

To how many of my present auditory these reflections may be applicable, I know not. I hope the number is small. But, whether great or small, I hope that every individual, to whom they are applicable, will apply them to himself, and labour, henceforward at least, to purge out the old leaven, and become a new paste, in order

that the sacrifice of Christ, his Pasch, may become profitable to him.

You, my brethren, who have seriously laboured to put to profit this seasonable time of penance, relax not in your labours. Return not again to the husks of swine. The evil spirit is, we hope, driven out from your inward house: suffer him not to enter again, *lest he bring with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and your last state should become worse than the first.* (Luke xi.) — Although you are exhorted to rejoice and be glad, be not high-minded. However firm you may *seem to stand, take heed lest you fall.* (1 Cor. x.) Proceed with fear and trembling. Few restraints will be laid on your appetite; take heed, lest one inordinate indulgence lead you to another, till at length, you proceed from lawful gratifications to those which are unlawful. Many have been led away in this manner, and from one gratification to another, have been led away by degrees from the paths of virtue, and have not stopt, until they have been given up to a reprobate sense. Many have risen, with Christ, at this holy time, and have returned again to the bonds of death. — Take care that this be not your case. *Christ rising from the dead, dieth now no more: death shall now no more have dominion over him.* (Rom. vi.) Be ye followers of him. Return no more to your former ways. Forsake the regions of sin and death.

for ever.—A life of holiness, such a life as is to lead you to happiness hereafter, will not endure interruptions. You cannot be holy and then polluted, and then holy and polluted again. You cannot expect salvation, after a life of continued inconstancy. *It were better for a man never to have known the way of justice, than, after having known it, to fall from it.* (2 Pet. ii.) You must go on in the same career. You must not look back. Were you once to fall from the state of justice, it would cost, not merely a confession of your fault, but many tears, much penance, and great grace to rise again, and to attain to your former state.—Were you to fall a second time from the ways of justice, it would cost you a great encrease of labour and repentance, and would require a stronger grace: and so on, in proportion to your falls.

No, my brethren, a life of holiness will not suffer interruptions. You must never again suffer yourselves to be bound with the bands, which have been so happily broken asunder. You must never more return to your former sins. Your Lord hath suffered, and is entered into his glory. You have suffered with him, and in the mansions, into which he has entered, he has prepared a place for you. *If, therefore, you be risen with him, saith the Apostle, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above,*

not the things that are on the earth. For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then shall you also appear with him in glory. (Col. iii.)

EASTER MONDAY.

ON THE RESURRECTION.

The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.
 LUKE xxiv. 34.

JOYFUL indeed, my brethren, must have been these tidings to the disconsolate, the desponding Apostles. Two days previous, their beloved Master had been despised and rejected by the whole nation, and in the midst of the greatest ignominy, consigned to the gloomy mansions of the dead. On this day, early in the morning, musing perhaps at the time, on the means of returning to their own country, there to resume their former occupations, amidst the scoffs and jeers which usually are lavished on the credulous and deluded, their ears are greeted with the joyful sound—*the Lord is risen*. Testimony confirms the report—and *he hath appeared to Simon*. Oh! what must have been their feelings on this oc-

casion ! How bright must have been the gleam of hope which darted across their minds ! How ready must they have been to exclaim with the Royal Prophet : *This is the day which the Lord hath made : let us rejoice and be glad therein !* (Ps. cxvii.)—But their fears were not removed by the testimony of one witness, although that one was Peter himself. Their hopes were raised, but not satisfied. So diffident were they of the testimony of each other, that ocular evidence alone brought conviction to their minds. Ardent as must have been their desires for the truth of this mystery, they were all incredulous ; so much so, that even after he had appeared to and conversed with ten of them together, Thomas positively refused to believe, unless he himself saw him, touched his body, and put his hands into his wounds.

These things, my brethren, like the rest of the scriptures, were intended for our instruction. Our faith was not to be built on shallow foundations. To Peter, as being the rock on which his Church was to be built, he appeared before he manifested himself to any of the other Apostles : and his testimony is adduced as the first creditable authority of the truth of the event. The testimony of the others, to whom he afterwards appeared, are collateral proofs of the same : and the incredulousness of Thomas, to whom he appeared lastly, and exhibited to his senses the desired testimonies, is a proof

that there was no connivance between them, and that truth was their only object.

Joyful, therefore, are the tidings even to us, that *the Lord hath risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon*. They are the foundation of our faith, the ground-work of our hope, and the completion of our charity.—Were the fact of our Lord's resurrection doubtful even in the remotest degree, we should be, like the Apostles, exposed to the fears of being a deluded people, a bewildered race, fixing our faith on a baseless rock, and worthy of the scoffs and jeers of men of sounder judgment and better understanding. But this is not the case. The motives of credibility are such, and the interposition of the power of God in the propagation of the belief of this mystery is so manifest, that every shadow of doubt is removed, to the satisfaction of every reasoning and unprejudiced mind.

In the beginning, earth and hell were leagued against it. The mystery of an incarnate crucified God-man, and his resurrection from the dead, was *a stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Gentiles*. (1 Cor. i.) The great ones of the earth, on whose opinions and examples the opinions and conduct of all the inferior classes mainly depend, the heads of the Jewish nation, to whom all people of the Jews were taught from their infancy to pay deference and submission, considered the ignominious

death of our Lord as a seal upon his character, and as a veil thrown over his name and mission for ever. They considered him no more than we consider a common malefactor, executed for his crimes.—The Apostles themselves, and every individual of his disciples, notwithstanding his forewarnings of what was to befall him, were in a state of anxiety and doubt, lest they had been the victims of a deluding impostor. Not an individual of the human race, his Blessed Mother alone excepted, had faith in him any farther than that he was a just man, and that he was crucified without cause. Had he remained among the dead, his disciples would soon have returned to their respective homes, and resumed their accustomed occupations. They were not men calculated to carry on the work of delusion. They were not fanatics, ready to sacrifice their lives, and to sacrifice the lives of others, in order to uphold a false system, which had taken possession of their minds. They candidly and sincerely believed that Jesus was to restore again the kingdom to Israel: but seeing that his enemies had prevailed over him, and that he was now numbered amongst the dead, they considered their hopes at an end, and all their brilliant prospects of being seated on his right hand and on his left in his kingdom, as entirely done away. His resurrection from the dead never entered their minds. Although he had admonished them that he should be betrayed, that he

should be put to death, and that on the third day he would rise again, (Matt. xvii.) : nevertheless, seeing that he was now dead, and that his body was sealed down in the sepulchre, and guarded by soldiers, what rational hope could they entertain, that they should see him again alive? The gates of death had never yet been broken down. A man raising himself from the dead, was a miracle that had never been witnessed from the beginning of the world : and could they, weak as their faith then was, expect to witness such an event? No : they had no such expectation. Thus we see, that, on the first day of the week, the pious women went to embalm his body :—that, when they found the body was gone, they supposed it had been taken away by the Jews :—that Peter and John, when the news was brought to them, ran with speed to ascertain the fact, and returned, concluding that the body was stolen :—that the two disciples going to Emmaus, said, that the women had *affrighted* them, by relating that they had seen a vision of angels, and that the Lord was alive :—and finally, that the Apostles individually would not believe that he was risen until they had seen him ; and that Thomas required no less a proof than to see the marks of the nails in his hands and feet, and to put his hand into his side.

On the truth of his resurrection, therefore, was their faith founded ; and truly joyful must have been to them the recollection of the first

tidings, that *the Lord had risen indeed, and had appeared to Simon.* This it was that encouraged them in all their labours :—this it was that strengthened them on all occasions :—this it was that led them to perseverance.

As it was with them, so likewise has it been with all their followers from the beginning : and so likewise is it with us. *If Christ be not risen again, as St. Paul remarks, (1 Cor. xv.) our faith is vain, for we are yet in our sins. They also that are fallen asleep in Christ, are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most miserable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep : for by a man came death, and by a man the resurrection of the dead.* Truly, my brethren, the whole of our faith, the whole of our religion, is founded on this mystery. For this reason, the Almighty was pleased to establish the truth of it on the most solid basis. He willed, that not an individual of the human race, his Mother alone probably excepted, who *kept all things pondering in her heart*, should be in expectation of the event : and that the knowledge of it should be imparted to those, to whom it *was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God*, by his own visible appearance, and by exhibiting his body even to be handled. He willed that this same chosen few should be doubtful and perplexed, lest the testimony of their senses should deceive them, and that then only

they should give credit to it, when it was impossible to be controverted.

On these foundations he fixed the credibility of this mystery. Consequently, when the Apostles began to preach, *the Lord working withal, and confirming the word with signs that followed*, (Mark xvi.) the number of believers in this mystery, and of course in all the mysteries of the new law, rapidly encreased. The testimony of those, *who were from the beginning, who had heard, who had seen with their eyes, who had looked upon, and whose hands had handled of the word of life*, (1 John i.) was a sufficient authority to ensure their belief.

Centuries and centuries are now elapsed since these things came to pass. But we, who live in these latter times, have, if possible, even more powerful motives to demand our assent to this mystery, than had the primitive Christians. We witness that most improbable, that most inconceivable event, that most positive testimony of the handy-work of the Most High, the only supreme director of hearts, namely, the universal assent of all the nations of the Gentiles to the belief of this mystery,—a mystery, hitherto unheard of from the beginning of the world,—a mystery totally opposite to every idea that had been entertained concerning the mortal remains of departed man. And we, moreover, witness that this belief has not been confined to one generation, or

to one people, but has continued to be the steadfast belief of all tribes, and peoples, and tongues, during eighteen centuries, with a confident assurance that it will continue so to be in all succeeding generations, till the consummation of time.

These are the strong foundations of our faith in the mystery of the resurrection. With this faith, my brethren, a Christian looks beyond the grave. Prospects of an immeasurable expanse open before him, at the very point where the prospects of unbelievers close upon their eyes for ever. He knows that, *Christ risen from the dead, is the first fruits of them that sleep. . . . that by him is to come the resurrection of the dead. . . . and that in him all again shall be made alive.* (1 Cor. xv.) He knows that the time will come, when *in his flesh he shall see God his Saviour*: (Job xix.) and that, although his body returns to its original dust, he knows that it is like *seed which is sown, and which is not quickened unless it first die.*—This pleasing hope it was, which encouraged the apostles and martyrs to face death, in defence of the truth, in its most horrible shapes. *What doth it profit me*, said St. Paul, *if (according to man) I fought with beasts at Ephesus, if the dead rise not again?* (1 Cor. xv.) This it was that sweetened the austerities and sufferings of the holy anchorites in the deserts, and of all the holy men and women who have decorated the Church in every age. And this it is, my brethren, which

is to sweeten all our toils and labours, to reconcile us to all the vicissitudes of life, and to encourage us to persevere to the end in the diligent performance of all Christian duties.

Let us consider, my brethren, what is the condition of man in this miserable world. We are not like the other animals of the creation. We are surrounded with cares and solitudes, from which they are free. We are liable to anxieties, to hopes, and fears, to the feelings of expectation and despair, from which they are exempt. Our troubles cannot be relieved, nor the sorrows of our hearts removed, by any of the gratifications of the senses. We may be wretched in the midst of plenty, and miserable in the midst of external enjoyments.—But, when we are duly impressed with the conviction, that we are here only in a state of probation;—that another and a better world awaits us;—that the short trials, the transitory toils and labours, which we have to endure here, are to be succeeded by an eternal weight of glory;—and that it is necessary to suffer with Christ, in order to be entitled to reign with him; then his condition in this world corresponds with the dignity of his nature, and his future destiny raises him far above all other created beings.—We, naturally almost I may say, look for something more than this world can give. There is a feeling within us, besides the senses of the body, which seeks for gratification. But, when we are assured that Christ is risen, the first

fruits of the dead, and that we are to rise with him, then all our hopes are defined, all the cravings of our nature are satisfied, all that the superiority of man over the brute creation can expect, is realized.

But with what sentiments of gratitude and love ought this mystery to animate our souls! We were buried in the horrors of darkness and in the shades of death, and the Sun of justice hath risen to us. We were under the sentence pronounced upon the first Adam—the sentence of eternal death; the second Adam has conquered death and hell, and reversed the sentence. Let us, therefore, pour forth our souls in acts of gratitude and love to this, our merciful Benefactor. What would all the things of this world have profited us, were they to have been succeeded by eternal misery? What would all the other mercies have availed us, if the gates of death had not been broken down, and the mansions of bliss opened for us? Our souls would have been inevitably lost, and lost for all eternity.—For every thing, therefore, of good that we possess, or that we hope to possess hereafter, we are indebted to the mercies of this, our bountiful Redeemer and Saviour. And is there any blessing that can claim a better title to our gratitude? Our *All* is secured by it: and is there any thing besides our *All* that has a claim to our notice? What will a man take in exchange for his soul? What recompense can be equivalent for the loss of an

eternity of happiness? What can give consolation in the midst of everlasting burnings? Ah! sincerely and continually ought we to cry out: *the mercies of the Lord I will sing for ever*: (Ps. lxxxviii.) *for he, who is powerful, has done great things to me, and holy is his name.* (Luke i.)

But the gratitude and love, which we are to return to him, must not consist of words only. It is to the heart that the Lord looketh, and not to the lips. The lips are deceitful, but the heart is sincere. Repentance is the chief characteristic of love. We must repent of our past rebellions against our God. We must repent that we have not only incurred the guilt of the transgression of our first parents, but that we have transgressed ourselves, through our own fault, and through our own exceeding great fault. We must repent, not merely through fear of the torments of hell, which we have deserved, and to which we were condemned, but because we have transgressed against the amiable will of God,—a crime which it was impossible for us to expiate, and which, in fact, could not be expiated by a less sacrifice than that of the blood of the *Word made flesh*.—We must repent, not merely on account of the suggestions of self-love, but on account of the love, which we ought to feel, and which ought to occupy our whole hearts, for him, who is alone worthy of our love:—for him, who is lovely above all that is in this world:—for him, who is

the object of the love and adoration of all the angels and saints in heaven:—for him, who is the beloved Son of the Father, *in whom he is always well pleased.*

Our repentance must of course be accompanied with a reform of life. *Christ rising again from the dead, dieth now no more, death shall no more have dominion over him. For in that he died to sin, he died once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. So do you also reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Let not, therefore, sin reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof. Neither yield you your members as instruments of iniquity unto sin: but present yourselves to God as those that are alive from the dead; and your members as instruments of justice unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace. (Rom vi.)* We are not, my brethren, like the Gentiles, who know not God. We are not like that immense multitude of wretched beings, whom we are daily in the habit of seeing and hearing, whose only thoughts are about eating or drinking, or satisfying the basest cravings of corrupt nature, and whose only language is swearing, or cursing, or defaming, or impure observations. We are under the law of Grace. We have been made acquainted with the things of God. We have eaten sweetmeats together at the table of the Lord. We have the knowledge of good and evil. We know what is necessary to be done

in order to satisfy for our past sins; and we know what is to be done, in order to sanctify our souls for the time to come. Truly, therefore, ought we to *reckon ourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Sin ought no more to have dominion over us.*

Reflect, therefore, seriously, my brethren, on this important subject. If you be truly risen with Christ, the appurtenances of death must be entirely thrown from you. If you are truly repentant of your sins, and sincerely resolved to serve your God faithfully for the future, you must never more fall back into your former ways, never more sully the purity of your souls by wilful mortal sin.

Oh! were you once to taste the sweets of innocence, and to know, by experience, what enjoyments God imparts to those who love him: were you once feelingly to be convinced that in vice there is nothing but bitterness, and in virtue nothing but exquisite happiness and delight, then you would begin to enjoy a foretaste of what you hope to enjoy eternally hereafter: then you would cry out with the Apostle: *O death where is thy victory! O death where is thy sting!* Yes, my brethren, death would no longer be an object of terror to you.—Let me, therefore, exhort you in the words of the same Apostle, *to be steadfast, and unmoveable, abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not vain in the Lord.* (1 Cor. xv.) *For, if you be risen with Christ, seek the things that*

are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth. For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then you also shall appear with him in glory. (Col. iii.)

LOW SUNDAY.

ON PERSEVERANCE IN PIETY.

*And after eight days....Jesus cometh, the doors being shut,
and stood in the midst of them, and said: Peace be to you.*
JOHN XX. 26.

IT is with joy, my beloved brethren, that I address you, in the words of my text: *Peace be to you.* You have now celebrated the solemn festival of the Christian Passover. You have assisted at the solemn commemoration of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. You have wept over the agonies which he endured for your redemption: and you have rejoiced at the glories of his triumphant resurrection.—Animated with this pious spirit, you have lamented over the sinful follies of your past lives. You have prepared yourselves for a reconciliation with your offended God. You have made solemn protestations of leading a virtuous life for the time to come. You have

shown yourselves to the priest: your leprosy has been cleansed: and you have been refreshed by the body and blood of your Lord, in the Holy Communion. And now I salute you with joy: *Peace be to you.* May you long continue in possession of that peace which you have acquired. May you never more rebel against your God by sin. May you never more experience an interruption of that harmony, which, we hope, subsists between you and your Creator: and may your present peace be succeeded by that eternal peace, which is enjoyed by the blessed in the bosom of the Divinity.

This is my salutation; and I hope it is applicable to every individual in this assembly. There is not one, I hope, who has partaken of the Christian Passover, with a heart wedded to sin, like Judas, and with the disposition of betraying his Lord again, after the conclusion of the solemnity. On the contrary, I hope that you have all made your peace with God; and that this peace will never be taken from you. On this supposition I shall address you in this discourse, and offer a few words of advice and encouragement to you.

There is joy in heaven, says our Lord, *over one sinner that doth penance.* (Luke xv.) Why is there joy in heaven? Not because the happiness of these blessed souls is increased by the conversion of a sinner, but because happiness is imparted to the sinner himself. The sinner it is who reaps the benefit: and the sinner it is

who ought particularly to exult. The shepherd rejoices, when he has found his lost sheep. But if the shepherd rejoice, how much greater reason has the sheep to rejoice, who has been rescued from the danger of being devoured, and has been restored to the pastures from which he had strayed?—Yes, my brethren, it is we, wretched sinners and lost sheep as we have been, it is we who have the greatest reason to rejoice. We have been liberated from the bonds of captivity:—we have obtained the remission of our debt:—we have found a treasure indeed, a treasure of inestimable value:—we have been put in possession of all that is desirable in heaven or on earth:—we have been united in the most intimate manner to the God who made us, even to the receiving his most holy body and blood into our breasts.

These, my brethren, are blessings indeed:—blessings, of which the world is not worthy:—blessings, which you ought to consider as of infinite more importance to you than the possession of an immense property, than the possession of the whole world itself.—The worldling rejoices and exults when a legacy to a great amount is bequeathed to him, and he obtains peaceable possession of it. But were he to obtain all that his heart could desire, it would give no ease to his mind in affliction, nor relief to his body in pain. He could not enjoy them in the grave, towards which he is hastening. He could not escape the anxieties and solici-

tudes, which invariably attend them during the few years that they are possessed : nor would he be freed from the danger, to which every rich man is exposed, of being led astray by his passions, and of dying in his sins.—But the possession of the love and friendship of God, is the possession of all that can give peace and tranquillity to the mind : it is the possession of that, which is superior in value to the whole world itself. Your God is the supreme master of All. The creation of this world, and of all that it contains, was the work of his hands: it was nothing more, if the expression may be allowed, than the sport of his Omnipotent power. The whole of it is undoubtedly worthy of our admiration and astonishment, for the whole of it, and every individual part of it, is above our comprehension: but what is it when compared with the Creator himself? *What is there to me in heaven,* says the Royal Prophet, (Ps. lxxii.) *and besides thee what is there on earth that I desire; O Lord?* Yes, what is there in this miserable world that is worthy of our affections, when compared with God! How can mortal perishable things, satisfy the cravings of an immortal, an imperishable soul? They may procure necessities for the body: they may procure superfluities, and gratify the pride of corrupt nature : but can they satisfy the cravings of an immortal soul? What shall we think of them when we are divested of the body of this death? What value shall we affix to them then?

Oh! we shall then be feelingly convinced that there is nothing worthy to be compared with God. We shall then see that, in possessing God, we possess all things, and that, in losing God, we lose all things. We shall then see clearly the extent of that happiness, which I hope you have all been labouring to obtain.

Were we truly and sincerely of the number of the just, we should entertain now the same sentiments regarding the things of this world, as we shall do hereafter. We should be convinced that true poverty of spirit contributed more to tranquillize the mind, than the possession of immense riches. We should clearly see that to sacrifice the friendship of God by wilful sin, would be a more costly sacrifice to our only real interests, than the sacrifice of all that we possessed in this world. We should feelingly acknowledge that the interior peace, which is enjoyed in the service of God, was infinitely superior to all worldly enjoyments. We should be convinced, by experience, that the true servants of God were in possession of the greatest happiness that could be enjoyed on this side the grave. We should find, that, at the time when the children of vanity were repining and murmuring under sufferings and afflictions, were lamenting under losses and disappointments, were bending under crosses and trials, and were weeping under the miseries incident to human life, we should find, I say, that we, in the midst of the same vicissitudes, enjoyed a

calm serenity of mind: and the reason would be, because we enjoyed delights of a purer nature, than what the world can give,—delights, which the God of all consolation infuses into the souls of his faithful servants, and which cannot be interrupted or diminished by the casual occurrences of life.——Truly, my brethren, were we of the number of the just, we should seek the enjoyments of the soul, and not exclusively those of the body: we should seek above all other things, the love and possession of the Great, Omnipotent, and Immutable Creator, and look upon the vain and perishable things of this world as dung, as St. Paul expresses it. In a word, we should have chosen the better part, and we should find that the observance of the law of God was better to us than thousands of gold and silver. But woe be to us, were we once to fall from that happy state. Judas tasted of the good things of the Lord: he eat sweetmeats together with him: and, to judge from his adherence to his Master, in all his labours and travels, he enjoyed the delights of piety, like the other apostles. He, afterwards, fell from that happy state, and betrayed his Master for the love of money. Oh let the fall of this unhappy man be a lesson to us, and let us strive to profit by it.——What did he gain by his perfidiousness? What advantage did the possession of money, earned by treachery and dishonesty, bring him? Did it place him in a happier state than he was in

before, when he was in the company of Jesus? Did it make amends for the love of God, of which he voluntarily deprived himself? Was his lot to be envied by the other apostles? No: happiness was from that instant for ever banished from his mind, and in a few hours afterwards, he went and threw the accursed money from him, and hanged himself with a halter in despair. Have we reason to expect that we shall escape the horrors, which assailed the mind of Judas, if we imitate his perfidy, by running into wilful sin? How bitterly does he now lament his unhappy choice! and how does he weep and gnash his teeth, when he beholds, at an immeasurable distance from him, his former companions, and fellow apostles! And how bitterly shall we bewail our unhappy lot, if we lose our souls, and behold our former friends and associates united to their God, and enjoying crowns of glory, which, perhaps, we shall then see, were intended for us.

Oh! my brethren, may the grace of God preserve you from this miserable state. You have ranked yourselves amongst the children of God in this world, and may you all be ranked in their number in the next. You have attended the marriage feast of the Lamb here, and may you all meet together to celebrate the same nuptials hereafter in his kingdom.—Fix your thoughts frequently on the distinguishing favours, which you have received from the Almighty. Like the children of Israel, the chosen

people of God, you have been selected from the rest of men, and associated to his fellowship. The blood of the Lamb has been sprinkled on your doors, and you have eaten of the flesh thereof. Even the body and blood of the Lamb of God has been given to you, in order to endow you with grace and strength to effect your deliverance from the spiritual land of Egypt—the regions of darkness and sin. Correspond, my brethren, with these favours. You have already declared your determination to renounce the slavery of your passions. Put those resolutions in practice, and hasten forward, by the exercise of all Christian virtues, to the land of promise—the heavenly Jerusalem.

It may be, perhaps, that you have yet a long way to go. Many difficulties may come upon you, and many dangers may threaten you.—The Israelites, after they had partaken of the Paschal Lamb, had to pass the Red Sea, and the tedious wilderness of the desert before they arrived at the land of promise. You may have difficulties to encounter as great as they had, although of a different kind. But the God, who strengthened them, will strengthen you. The Lord went before the Israelites in a pillar of fire for their guidance, and he protected them from behind with a cloud. He will act, somewhat in a similar manner, with you. He will, by the voice of his ministers, as if it were by a pillar of fire, point out to you the way in which you are to walk, and the path which you are to

follow, in order to arrive at the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem: and he will protect you, by his graces, and by his paternal Providence, as by a cloud, from the attacks of your spiritual enemies, who will continue to pursue you, with the intent of reducing you again under the subjection of sin, and the slavery of your passions. —Be attentive, therefore, my brethren. Listen to the voice, which is commissioned to direct you. Walk in the path, which will be pointed out to you.

You may form an idea of the dangers, which you will have to encounter, by calling to mind those, which you have hitherto experienced. You will meet with the same again, during the course of your progress. Fight manfully against them. Be not dismayed by the multiplicity, or by the continuance of them. Perseverance will give you a complete victory, and you will enjoy the triumph.—The Israelites yielded to the temptations which they had formerly indulged, gave way again to the spirit of lust, and received the women of Madian; and four and twenty thousand of them were slain. Tremble, lest a more awful fate fall upon you, if you again yield up your members to serve iniquity, as they did.

Many of you, probably, have hitherto experienced temptations to excess, or inordinate indulgence in eating or drinking, and have yielded to them. Keep a strict guard over yourselves, lest you be induced to fall again into the

same disorders, for the same temptations will again assail you.—The Israelites longed after the flesh-pots and onions of Egypt. They murmured against the Lord, and against his ministers. They declared, that their souls loathed the manna that the Lord provided for them, and cried aloud for meat. Their ungrateful complaints were heard. Meat was given to them: and the flesh was yet between their teeth, when they were struck with an exceeding great plague.—Beware, lest a greater plague fall upon you, if you relapse into your former excesses.

Many of you, probably, have placed your affections too much on the perishable things of this world, have felt too great a love for money, and in order to encrease your stores, have not paid sufficient attention to the rules of honesty, or the calls of charity. The same temptations you will experience again. Fight resolutely against them. Learn to be content with what Providence shall be pleased to bestow upon you: and if more be given to you than is sufficient for your support, open the bowels of compassion to your suffering brethren, and relieve their necessities. — The Israelites relapsed into their former idolatry, and impiously knelt down, and adored the golden calf: and three and twenty thousand of them were slain.— Beware, lest the second and eternal death be inflicted on you, if you again place your affec-

tions on money, and adore the creature before the Creator.

You will all of you experience many discouragements, and the enemies of your salvation will throw every obstacle in your way. But be not disconcerted by them. Be courageous, and the grace of God will give you the victory. The Land of Promise is not a land which devoureth its inhabitants. The ways of virtue are not hard ways, as I have already described to you. The interior consolations, which will accompany your labours, will make every thing sweet and agreeable. Take courage, then : or rather, run to the fight with joy. Resist your passions manfully. Deny yourselves with patience. Do penance for your past sins with earnestness. Offer up your supplications with fervour and perseverance : and rely on the assistance of God with confidence.—The Israelites trembled at the idea of the difficulties which, it was said, they would have to encounter, in obtaining possession of the promised land. They murmured against the Lord, in the person of Moses his minister : and the consequence was, that sentence was passed on them, that not one of the complainants should enter the promised land, but that they should all die in the desert.—Beware, my brethren, and murmur not against the Lord, nor complain of the weight of the yoke, which he places on your shoulders, lest the same sentence be passed on

you. Keep a strict watch over yourselves, and never again transgress any of the ordinances of God. These Israelites had all partaken of the Paschal Lamb, and had all been delivered out of the land of bondage. Nevertheless, on account of their frequent transgressions, on account of their relapses into sin, they were cast off, and out of that immense multitude of six hundred thousand men, only two, Josue and Caleb, who had not joined in the rebellion, entered into the Land of Promise. The rest, although they were children of the promise, perished in the desert.

—Will it be the same with you, my christian brethren? Will you relapse into your former disorders? Will you walk in the footsteps of the rebellious Israelites, and, like them, be excluded from your inheritance? Will not more than two of you be admitted into the Land of Promise? God forbid. But on this subject we can say nothing. Every individual amongst you may say, that it depends on his own exertions to correspond with the grace of God, whether he shall be of the happy number or not. The way is pointed out to you all. The gates of heaven are open to all: and every one of you may enter, if you do what is required of you. God does not without cause exclude any one. Do not, therefore, exclude yourselves. You have now seriously begun: persevere with courage. You have eaten the Paschal Lamb: enter on the laborious paths of the desert with alacrity and joy. — You have made a solemn

covenant with God, of perpetual allegiance for the future : let no temptations induce you to break it.—You cannot enjoy a greater happiness, even in this world, than what is to be enjoyed in the ways of piety. You cannot possess a greater treasure than the love and friendship of God. Be resolute, therefore, and be constant in the work which you have begun. Proceed on in the narrow path with speed, and you will proceed with joy. Walk in the footsteps of your crucified Jesus. Persevere to the end. Then you may look forward with confidence, and enjoy the pleasing hope that you will be of the number of the chosen few, who will be found worthy to enter into the true Land of Promise—the heavenly Jerusalem.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON MEEKNESS.

When he was reviled, he did not revile: when he suffered, he threatened not: but delivered himself to him that judged him unjustly..... 1 PET. ii. 23.

IN the gospel which is read on this Sunday, our blessed Saviour exhibits himself to us under the amiable form of the good shepherd. *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep.* As a good shepherd is solicitous for the welfare of his flock, so is he solicitous for us. As a good shepherd leads his sheep into the best pastures, so does he lead us into pastures where our souls will be fed with bread from heaven, and be prepared for an eternal union with him. As the good shepherd seeks the lost sheep, and, when found, brings him on his shoulders rejoicing to the fold, so does he seek after the deluded sinner, and, upon his repentance, takes him up, as it were, on his

shoulders, brings him back to the fold, imparts the happy tidings to the angels and saints, and causes universal joy to the whole court of heaven.—As the good shepherd watches over his sheep, and protects them, even at the risk of his life, from their enemies, so does he watch over and protect us from our spiritual enemies ; and when all mankind had gone astray by sin, did he willingly and cheerfully give his life for their ransom. Such is the amiable character which he gives of himself in the gospel of this Sunday.

In the same gospel, he likewise gives us to understand who are these sheep, over whom he watches with such amiable solicitude. *I know mine*, he says, *and mine know me....my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.* They only, therefore, are his sheep, who hear his voice, and follow him. They only are his sheep, who seek to be perfect, and to walk in the footsteps which he has traced for them. Not indeed that all others, who do not at present walk with him, are rejected : for he says, *there are other sheep which are not of this fold : them also I will bring, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.*

Having premised these few reflections, I will call your attention to one of the most striking features in the character of your heavenly Shepherd, and which is read in the epistle of this day ; and from the obligation imposed on you, of following him, and walking in his

footsteps, I will prove the necessity of being meek and humble under all trials, provocations, and afflictions. Be attentive : for it is a subject calculated to smooth the rugged paths of life, and to give ease and contentment to the wounded mind.

When he was reviled, he did not revile : when he suffered, he threatened not : but delivered himself to him that judged him unjustly. Apply this to common life, and endeavour to model your conduct according to it. Your blessed Lord, during the time of his sojourning on earth, was in form like other men. He had no distinctive mark to denote his heavenly origin. He was considered to be the son of Joseph and Mary, and, until the time of his manifestation, when he began to work such wonders as no one before him had ever wrought, he appeared no more than as a young carpenter, who gained his scanty pittance by the sweat of his brow. —In this state, it may be confidently asserted, that he experienced much the same treatment from men, as you yourselves experience. In fact, during the course of his ministry, notwithstanding all his wonderful works, he experienced every evil which envy and malice could inflict, from all, those few only excepted, whom he had drawn to himself by his special grace, and ranked in the number of his disciples. Of course, we may fairly say, that, like you, he had few friends, and many enemies ; that, like you, he was exposed to insults, scoffs, and derisions ; that,

like you, he was oftentimes calumniated and traduced ; that he was vilified and abused ; that he was over-reached and wronged ; that he was accused innocently, and that he suffered unjustly. We may reasonably say, that he was an object of envy to some, of suspicion to others, of malice and hatred to others. We may, likewise, justly surmise that, in addition to this treatment, which he received from his beloved creatures, he received much the same as you yourselves receive from the hand of Providence. We may say, that he was sometimes in want, and sometimes enjoyed abundance ; that he sometimes was wearied down with fatigue, and sometimes afflicted with head-aches, and pains of body, and illness of one kind or another, in the same manner as you are.—We may go farther, and say, that there is nothing in the inspired writings to disprove the assertion, that he was liable to temptation ; for, as the Apostle says, *he was found in all things like unto us, excepting sin.* (Phil. ii.) Of course we may say, that he experienced temptations to anger and impatience ; that he experienced temptations to pride and vain-glory ; in a word, that he experienced all the temptations, to which the human nature, which he had assumed, was liable ; for the devil, the roaring lion who goeth about seeking whom he may devour, knew not at that time that he was the Christ.

And what was the deportment of our Lord and Saviour under all these trials ? He was

tempted in all things like unto us. But have we reason to say, that, under the same trials, we are like unto him? He is our model, and we are commanded to walk in his footsteps; and can we flatter ourselves, that we have hitherto fulfilled this command? It may readily be allowed, that our inducements to transgress are multiplied and urgent: but, unless we are found like unto him, nothing can make us justified in the sight of God. He has said: *Be ye perfect, as my heavenly Father is perfect.* (Matt. v.) *Be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ:* said the Apostle of the Gentiles. (1 Cor. xi.) With the model, therefore, before our eyes, and having the command of conforming ourselves to this model, so clearly expressed by the Spirit of God, how manifest is the obligation imposed on every one of us, of labouring to attain perfection: not merely of abstaining from sin, and fulfilling the duties of a christian life in a regular, but in a tepid, indifferent manner; but of attaining perfection, by fulfilling every command, and practising every virtue, in the way that the will of God requires of us. No authority, either on earth or in heaven, will ever diminish this obligation.

It is not required, indeed, that we should not feel the weakness of human nature. Temptations to anger, to hatred, to animosity, ill-will, and desires of revenge, may be experienced, and we may feel within ourselves a strong disposition to yield to such temptations, and yet

not incur the guilt of sin. But this will depend entirely on the violence which we offer to corrupt nature, and on our own patient forbearance. Such dispositions must be resisted ; and resisted effectually. It will be no available excuse to say : " I felt myself overpowered : I did not give myself time to think : I was in an ill humour, and I could not endure contradiction." Nothing of that kind will plead effectually in our favour. As Christians, it was our duty to be always on the watch ; it was our duty to resist the beginnings of anger, and to quell the rising tumults of our breasts, before they broke out into a storm. And if we were negligent in taking these precautions, reason itself will say, that we must be answerable for the consequences. The example of our blessed Lord ought to be constantly before our eyes. He was the model of meekness and humility in the most trying circumstances. He was always *meek and humble of heart*. (Matt. xi.) *He did not contend, nor cry out, neither did any man hear his voice in the streets : the bruised reed he did not break, nor did he extinguish the smoking flax*. (Matt. xii.) Provocations to anger probably assailed him, according to his humanity, as often, and as violently as they assail you : but he overcame them all by meekness. He had as many, and perhaps more enemies than you have : but he returned good for evil, and was never weary with well doing.—The same must be your conduct. Meekness must be your characteristic

virtue ; and anger and passion must at all times be banished from your minds. When you perceive that ill temper is rising in your breast, you ought immediately to take the alarm, and resist it with energy. If ordinary means will not do, you must have recourse to prayer, and not desist till your mind is restored to a calm.

There are many persons, I acknowledge, who feel within themselves a certain perturbation of mind, which causes them to be displeased with almost every person, and at almost every thing. These people are naturally morose in their manners, pettish in their words, quarrelsome in their behaviour, and, like a lion in his den, not to be approached by others, without danger of some violence, either in word or action. This disposition, I allow, is inherited from nature. But even on these the command of being meek and humble of heart is imposed equally as on others. It is their duty to fight against corrupt nature, and correct its failings, however arduous the task may be. There is no exemption for any one. If it were otherwise, our Lord would have delivered his command in very different words : he would have said : “ Ye, who are naturally meek, be meek and humble : and ye, who are naturally choleric, and whose passions are turbulent, be not dismayed, for perfect meekness is not expected in you.” Nothing of this, however, is to be found in the gospel. The command is ab-

solite and general : and nothing can justify the infringement of it.—Many, perhaps, will say, that, if this statement be correct, the man who is naturally ill-tempered and passionate, is less favoured by the Almighty, and in greater danger of losing his soul, than the man who is placid and mild; and that more is required of him to whom less is given. In this one instance, perhaps, the inference may be just. But we are to consider the whole of the Christian's conflict. If the meek fulfil this command with ease, whilst the passionate have almost insuperable difficulties to surmount, it is not the same with respect to all the other commands of God. The meek feel within themselves propensities, to which the passionate are strangers. They are frequently assailed with temptations to other sins, which the passionate seldom experience. They have as many difficulties to encounter and overcome in their conflict with their predominant passion, as the passionate, and they have as much to do to save their souls, as they have.—There is no injustice, therefore, on the part of God, in imposing this command : nor is there favour shewn to one in preference to another. *Be ye perfect as my heavenly Father is perfect*, is a precept, which comprises the whole of the duties of a christian life : and the fulfilment of the whole of the duties, is as difficult for one as it is for another.

You, therefore, who are passionate, and morose, seek no pretext to justify your ill tempers.

Meek and humble of heart you must be, or the kingdom of heaven will never be your inheritance. It is to no purpose to say: "My passions are so violent, and my temper so irritable, that I cannot at all times keep it in subjection." Had we no other resource than our own strength, such a plea, perhaps, would be accepted. But, knowing that all our strength is to come from God, and knowing that strength will be given to us, provided we apply for it, by humble prayer, as we ought, can it be supposed by any one who is acquainted, even in a slight degree, with the Christian dispensation, that an instructed person can be without sin, who transgresses against any one of the commands of God?—Would the ill tempered man admit such a plea, were it submitted to his judgment, in favour of the man, who felt a violent propensity, and frequently yielded to the temptations of lust, or intemperance? It would be to little purpose that he asserted that the flames of lust burnt so ardently in his flesh, or that the desires of drink were so irresistible, that he was incapable of conquering himself. He would not admit such a plea. He would say, that he ought to resist such temptations, and that if his flesh was weak, and that he had not sufficient powers of his own, strength would be given to him from above, if he properly applied for it. The same ought he to say to himself. It is his duty to subdue his ill tempers, and his moroseness: and if he experience that

his own strength is not sufficient for this purpose, he ought to apply, in a due manner, to him who has promised to be our support.

There are, indeed, occasions, when, not only they who are naturally passionate, but even they who are meek, experience violent conflicts within themselves, and are powerfully urged to anger and wrath. For, it sometimes happens, that the innocent are unjustly accused, that the most scurrilous abuse is heaped upon them, and that they are persecuted, and almost trodden under foot. It frequently happens, likewise, that they, who pretend to no extraordinary degree of sanctity, experience that evil is returned for good, that contradictions and affronts are given, when not merited, and that calumnies and slanders are invented, when no cause is given. It frequently happens that, from one cause or another, something occurs which is calculated to rouse the feelings of the meek, as well as of the passionate. But, even on these occasions, the passion of anger can never be indulged without crime. Patience and forbearance are the only weapons, which a Christian ought to employ; and they are the only weapons, which will effectually defend his cause.

The world, indeed, will not subscribe to this doctrine. But, the world is not our rule, nor are its laws our laws. As Christians, we are the followers of Christ: he alone is our rule: his word alone is our law. He experienced more evil treatment, during his mortal life, than

we shall do. He was pursued by his enemies with the utmost rancour. He was abused, and vilified, and calumniated. He was struck on the face, and spit upon, and scourged, and mocked, and crowned with thorns, and nailed to the cross. He died in the midst of reproaches, humiliations, and contempt. All these things he endured, and he endured them cheerfully. *He was led to the slaughter like a lamb, not opening his mouth: when he was reviled, he did not revile: when he suffered, he threatened not; but delivered himself up to him that judged him unjustly.* This is the example which we are to follow: these are the footsteps in which we are to walk. He was meek under provocations and insults; it is our duty to be the same. He was meek under injuries and calumnies; it is our duty to be the same. He was meek under persecutions and tortures; it is our duty to be the same. He did not return abuse for abuse, in jury for injury. He did not seek revenge, nor did he endeavour to console his wounded feelings by indulging the spirit of animosity and hatred. We must follow his example.—It is to no purpose to plead the weakness of human nature, or the violence of temper. To be meek and humble of heart, and to walk in the footsteps of our suffering Jesus, is a duty imposed on every one, and in every circumstance of life: and no occurrence, no authority, can justify the infringement of it.

The observance of this precept, I acknowledge, will at times be very repugnant to the

feelings of flesh and blood; particularly on those occasions, when provocations of the most irritating nature are given, and seem to demand our indignation. But what is impossible to man, is possible to God. His grace is sufficient to enable us to do all things. I certainly must allow that the man, who has been long habituated to the violence of passion, cannot, without an extraordinary grace, become meek on a sudden, and endure insults and provocations without anger. But by degrees, assisted only with ordinary grace, the most passionate may become meek,—the most ill-tempered may become mild; and meek and mild in such a manner, as to be worthy to be called the faithful followers of the meek and humble Jesus. This change has been wrought in the mind of man, and has been wrought sometimes in the minds of those who have not attained the age of maturity. It was the grace of God that worked this change in them, and the same grace is ready to work the same change in you. —It is proper, however, to remark, that the men, in whom this change was wrought, were exemplary for their piety; their hearts were inflamed with the love of God; and their great, their only solicitude, was to atone for their past offences, and to sanctify their souls. These were their dispositions, and these were sufficient to wean their minds from terrestrial things, and to attach them to those only which are eternal. Were your dispositions to piety the same as theirs, the grace of God would soon

cause meekness and mildness to become habitual to you. Sin alone would destroy your peace of mind, and the anger of God would alone distress your feelings.

Endeavour, therefore, to correct your failings. Take off your affections from the things of this world. Be submissive to the will of God, under all the afflictions he may be pleased to send you. Consider not this land of exile as the place of your happiness. Reflect that it is through many tribulations that you are to be saved; that *the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and that the violent only bear it away.* (Matt. xi.) Seek, therefore, peace with God, and you will soon enjoy peace with all men. Be truly devout, and you will soon become truly meek. Remember, likewise, that you will be well rewarded for your labours, even in this world. For, inasmuch as passion and ill-temper contribute to uneasiness and misery, so much will meekness and mildness contribute to peace and serenity of mind. But the greatest encouragement of all is, that a crown of glory will be prepared for you hereafter: *blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land.* (Matt. viii.)—Be earnest, therefore, in your endeavours, and all will be well with you. Instil into your minds the spirit of piety and devotion, and the conquest of your passions will be a work of ease. Persevere to the end, and all that is valuable, both in this world and the next, will be your inheritance.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON THE JOYS WHICH AWAIT THE SORROWFUL IN
ANOTHER WORLD.

You now, indeed, have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice; and your joy no man shall take from you. JOHN XVI. 22.

THESE, my brethren, are the consoling words, which our Lord addressed to his apostles, the night before his Passion. The time was come, when the shepherd was to be struck, and the sheep dispersed. The time was at hand, when they were to behold their Divine Master in the hands of his enemies, treated as a seducer and malefactor, and condemned to the death of the cross. The time was at hand, when they were to endure sorrow, exceeding any that they had hitherto experienced:—when they were to be left destitute and desolate:—when all their cheering prospects were to be veiled under the deepest

cloud :—and when the strongest faith, even the faith of Peter, would be inadequate to maintain its ground. On the approach of this accumulation of evils, their Lord, in order to prepare them for the conflict, held out to them the comfortable assurance, that their sorrow should be but for a time ; that joy should succeed ; that that joy should be great ; and that the malice of men should never be able to wrest it from them. *I will see you again*, he said, *and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you.*

We, my brethren, frequently stand in need of the same consoling assurance. Did the things of this world always go on according to our wishes ;—were we always in the midst of prosperity ;—were we always secure from the malice of enemies, and the tongues of malevolence ;—and did we always enjoy the sweets of piety, and the interior delights of the presence of our Lord and Master, then we should always rejoice :—then we should serve the Lord without difficulty, and we should feelingly say, that *his yoke was sweet, and his burthen light.* But this is not the case. He frequently withdraws himself, as it were, from us :—he causes afflictions, and losses, and pains, to come upon us ; and he permits our hearts to be filled with sorrow. On these occasions it is, that we stand in need of consolation. And what greater consolation can we have, than the assurance that these trials will be only for a time ;—that Jesus will come, and see us again ;—and that, if we

submit with patience to the will of God, the time will come when our hearts shall rejoice, and our joy no man shall take from us.—Let us, then, apply this sentence to ourselves in the various occurrences of life. It will contribute to cheer the gloomy paths of our pilgrimage, and encourage us to meet, and overcome, the obstacles which oppose our progress towards the abodes of happiness, which have been prepared for us by our suffering Jesus. Give your attention to a few reflections on this subject. They will be applicable to every one of you : for sorrows and trials are the universal portion of all.

The life of man is a warfare upon earth. During the whole of his course through the desert of this world; it is appointed that he should meet with trials and crosses of one kind or another. It is the will of God that it should be so. He knows what is most beneficial for us; and, with the tenderness of a loving parent, he consults our good in all his dispensations. —Knowing that the weakness of human nature would shrink under sufferings were it not supported by his grace, and animated to patient endurance by example, he has placed before our eyes a model of suffering and of patience, in the person of his own beloved Son. Him he chastised. Him he exposed to the severest trials; and him he delivered up into the hands of his enemies to suffer the most excruciating tortures, and to die the most disgraceful

death of the cross. In the whole of our Saviour's life, there are not to be seen any of those comforts, any of that tranquil retirement, and social happiness, in which, according to the world, the enjoyment of life consists. During his infancy, he endured the inconveniences and privations attendant on persecution. During his youth, and manhood, he gained his bread by the sweat of his brow, and endured the hardships of poverty. At his entrance on his divine mission, he subjected himself to the rigours of a protracted fast : and, during the course of his ministry, he not only laboured in preaching and instructing during the day, and submitted to the painful sensations of hunger, thirst, and fatigue, but, during the night, he frequently had not a place whereon to lay his head. His whole life was a life of suffering and privation : and he suffered, leaving us an example, that we should walk in his footsteps.

This is the model, my brethren, which the goodness of God has been pleased to place before our eyes, for our encouragement to patient endurance under the crosses and afflictions of this life. And, who is there amongst us, that can contemplate such a model with attention, and at the same time murmur at the dispensations of Providence in his regard? Ought man to complain under defamations and scandals, from whatever quarter they may come, when he sees his Lord and Master treated as a seducer and hypocrite, even by the very creatures whom

he came from heaven to redeem and save? Ought man to complain under pains and sufferings, when he sees his Saviour enduring in silence the tortures of the cross? Ought man to lament under crosses and contradictions, when he beholds the Son of God bleeding, and dying for his sake, without opening his mouth?—No, my brethren, let us look up to our Jesus, and in all the various occurrences of life, let us consider that it is he who ordains that such or such things should befall us; and let us submit ourselves cheerfully to his holy will.

Had it been that we were sent into this world, for no other purpose than to seek and find enjoyment in it, then the obstacles to our obtaining that enjoyment, would be serious and sufficient causes for grief, and reason would allow us to deplore our unhappy lot.—But this is not our place of rest. There is a better world prepared for us; and it is by patient endurance in suffering that we are to possess our souls here, and to save them hereafter.

This is the ordinance of God, and it is good. For, were it in the power of man to avoid suffering altogether,—to repress the stings of anxiety, uneasiness, and remorse;—to banish from his mind the distressing thoughts usually occasioned by the loss of friends, by disappointments and vexations;—to be entirely exempt from pains of body, or the infirmities of human nature; who is there amongst us that would not embrace that happy state? And yet,

were we to embrace it, how would it be possible to save our souls? Should we ever think of God in the manner that we ought? Should we be able to fix our affections solely, and wholly on him, when we enjoyed every thing here, that our hearts could desire? Should we be able to offer violence to ourselves, and, by renouncing present ease, prove ourselves deserving of eternal rest hereafter? No: we should sit down contented in this place of exile. We should seldom think of another world. We should say, *it was good for us to be here.* We should love this world alone: and when our last hour arrived, we should find that we had done nothing for heaven, and consequently, that, since the inscrutable justice of God cannot give a reward where no merit is due, the mansions of bliss would not be our inheritance. And would this be a desirable lot?—Truly, we have no reason to lament that the paths of life are strewn with thorns. Our Lord knows what is best for us; and it is for the most beneficent purposes that he sends us sufferings. *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.* Our sorrows will not be of long continuance. Our Lord will come and see us again: and then *our hearts shall rejoice, and our joy no man shall take from us.*

These, my brethren, are the consolations which the religion of Jesus imparts to the true Christian in the midst of suffering. Happy would it be, were we all to weigh them well in

our mind, and to profit by them, in the manner intended by our heavenly Father. But, alas ! how frequently do we witness, even in Christians who lead regular lives, symptoms of a desponding spirit, when the hour of trial comes upon them ! How many, for example, are there, who are fervent and devout, when their hearts are warmed, and the interior sweets of devotion are imparted to them ; but, when the Lord is pleased to withdraw himself for a time, offer no violence to themselves, soon become tepid and indolent, begin to neglect their usual exercises of devotion, and after a while, fall back into their former ways of sin. Of these it may be truly said, that the enjoyments of piety in this world, and not the fulfilment of the will of God, were their chief attractions in the ways of virtue.—How many are there, who pray as long and as often as they find prayer agreeable to their sensual feelings ; but who, as soon as they find that distractions crowd in upon them, and that their attention is hurried away, and consequently the pleasure of prayer removed, instead of persevering, as they ought to do, immediately desist, under the idea that such prayer will not profit them. Of these it may be said, that they seem to think that the Almighty is unmindful of the infirmities of human nature, and that he will not attend to the desires of the heart, unless the mind is absolutely absorpt in him. Whereas, distractions of this kind are frequently permitted by him

for the exercise of our humility, and for our advancement in virtue.—How many are there, who, when visited with afflictions, instead of turning to God, and seeking consolation in him, pretend that their minds are so discomposed that they cannot pray : and thus deprive themselves of the fruits which the patient endurance of tribulations, which they could not avoid, would have purchased for them.—How many are there, who, when subjected to losses, instead of saying with holy Job, *the Lord has given, and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord*, (Job i.) give themselves up to despondency, torture themselves with anguish and anxiety, and too frequently run into excesses, in order to drown their cares. Whereas patience, and submission to the will of heaven, would have removed the load of their sorrows, and purchased for them a never-failing treasure in heaven.—How many are there, who, when afflicted with pains of body, or decay of health, repine under their cross : and instead of making a merit of their sufferings, pretend that they cannot pray, nor think of any thing serious : and thus suffer without merit, and without reward.—How many are there, who, when frowned upon by the world, and reduced to poverty and distress, turn their backs on their only comforter, the God of all consolation : and, instead of seeking redress where alone it can be found, and preparing themselves for happiness in another world, give themselves up to despon-

dency : and, under pretence that they cannot appear with their usual decency of dress in the place of worship, renounce the altar of God, neglect the sacraments, profane the Sundays, violate the commands of God and the Church, and, in a literal sense, become castaways.

Many there are of all these descriptions: and with what propriety may not the following expostulations be addressed to them! You say that, in the midst of your distresses, you cannot raise your hearts to God : that your spirits are so overpowered, and your minds so much perplexed and harassed, that you cannot compose yourselves to prayer. But, were means offered of extricating yourselves from these troubles, would you not immediately cheer up, and embrace them with alacrity and ardour? Were compensations superior to your losses proffered to you, would you not soon forget your present sorrows, and be as cheerful and happy, as if nothing had happened? Now religion is intended to procure for you these blessings. Religion informs you, that nothing has befallen you, but what was permitted and ordained by an all-wise God to befall you, for the best of purposes,—even for the purpose of providing for you blessings for all eternity. Religion informs you, that it matters little what your state is in this mortal life, provided you are found worthy to enjoy God eternally in the world to come. Religion informs you, that a Christian can suffer no real loss, but the loss

of God and of his soul;—that he can have no sufficient cause for grief or sorrow, but the consciousness of his having incurred the guilt of sin, whereby he has rendered himself liable to the sentence of an eternal separation from God, and all that is good. Religion informs you, that, by turning to God, and submitting yourselves unreservedly to the ordinances of his holy will, you will experience consolations infinitely greater than any that you could enjoy from those temporal things, of which you are deprived.—These, my brethren, are consoling remedies for the afflicted mind ; and how seldom is it that the suffering Christian applies them to his soul!

To those, who are cast down, and disheartened when in the midst of pains and sufferings, and who, instead of raising up their hearts to God, give themselves up to despondency, we may say : “ Why are ye sad and sorrowful? Religion teaches you that sufferings, patiently endured, will purchase for you an eternal weight of glory. Religion informs you, that the Christian must suffer in this world, in order to be entitled to happiness in the next ; *if we suffer with Christ, we shall reign with him.* (1 Pet. ii.) Religion teaches you, that by every sin you have committed, you have rendered yourselves deserving of the most excruciating tortures in the next world. Religion teaches you, that you cannot suffer more than you deserve, and that God has a

right to inflict upon you sufferings a hundred-fold greater than those you now endure. Religion informs you, that afflictions are blessings, when endured with patience, because they will be sanctified by the blood of Jesus, and received by God as a commutation for those eternal torments, which you have deserved. Religion, and the experience of multitudes, inform you, that it is easier, though not so consonant to the feelings of human nature, to endure pains with patience than with impatience, and that it is infinitely more agreeable. For, by the one a soothing balm is diffused over the mind, whereas, by the other an encrease of irritation is produced :—the one cheers the mind with the hope of an eternal reward, the other removes every cheering prospect from the sight :—the one strengthens the soul, and encourages her to the practice of other virtues, the other paralyzes her powers, and renders her incapable of every exertion.—Religion holds out before you the example of your suffering Jesus, and assures you, that he humbled himself to the death of the cross, for no other purpose than that you, by suffering with him, might be exalted by him to the summit of happiness at the right hand of his Father.

These, my brethren, are considerations, which religion proposes to you in the midst of affliction ; and were you to give them that serious thought, which their importance demands, they would contribute materially to alleviate the

weight of every cross which is laid upon your shoulders.

To those who, being in a state of poverty, say that their spirits are so depressed by what they have to endure, that they have neither courage nor resolution to set about any thing serious, and that they are ashamed to enter a place of worship, lest they should be ridiculed and despised, I would say : " To you religion is of the utmost importance. Religion teaches you, that it is better to make a good use of poverty, and to profit by it, than to make it subservient to your eternal condemnation. Religion teaches you that, if the world frown upon you, it becometh you to turn to God, who will be always ready to receive you. Religion invites you to take off your affections from a world, which imparts to you few or none of its pleasures, and to place your whole delight in preparing yourselves for that eternal happiness, which God has prepared for his faithful servants in the other world. Religion teaches you, that it matters little what men may think of your outward appearance, provided you are but clothed with the robe of holiness and justice : and that, if you are despised, it will only be by wicked men ; for the just are well assured, that if they despise the poor, they despise Christ himself. Religion holds out before them the poverty of their Lord and Master, and assures them, that, instead of its being a disgrace or a dishonour

to resemble him, it is their merit and their crown."

Come then, my brethren, whatever your afflictions, whatever your distresses may be, run to your God. He will be your comforter. He will be your refuge. Hush every murmur. Repress every sigh. Dry up every tear. Look up to heaven, and behold the crowns of never-fading glory, which are prepared for the afflicted and patient followers of the suffering Jesus. Be convinced that it is expedient for you, that you should have sorrow here below. The time of trial will soon be over, and then *you shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you*. Stand firm, and be in all things perfect. Persevere to the end : and these your momentary sufferings shall be crowned with an everlasting weight of glory in the bosom of the Divinity.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON WATCHFULNESS OVER THE TONGUE.

Let every man be swift to hear: but slow to speak, and slow to anger..... JAMES i. 19.

A SALUTARY admonition, my brethren, is contained in these few words of my text, and they are applicable to almost every individual amongst us. Our depraved nature is such, that, unless we are animated with the true spirit of piety, and are acquainted with that sincere christian humility, which seeks that, which alone is our due, namely, contempt and degradation, we are ever seeking ourselves, and look upon our own judgment and discrimination as perfectly sufficient for our guidance in the different opinions we may form of the rectitude, either of our own actions, or of the actions of others. Hence it too frequently happens, that we follow in practice the very reverse of the admonition contained in the words

of my text ;—that we are slow to hear what others have to say in their own vindication, and swift to speak our own sentiments concerning their outward demeanour ; and likewise, that we are swift to anger, when others, perhaps of sounder judgment, or more charitable dispositions, refuse to credit our declarations. This is no uncommon thing. We all witness it from time to time : and perhaps it may be allowable to say, that there are very few, if any, amongst us, but who have transgressed in this respect many times.

It is a question of considerable importance, to enquire into the causes of this opposition to the precepts of the gospel. We all admire the man who is open to conviction ; who does not obstinately adhere to his own opinion, in spite of superior arguments to the contrary ;—who is swift to hear what others have to say in defence of their cause ;—who is slow to speak, when evidence is not on his side ;—and who is slow to anger, when his opinions and his judgment are not admitted as correct by others. Why then do we not walk in the same footsteps ? The reasons are, in the first place, that by giving implicit credit to our own judgment, we imagine that we see things in a clearer light than they are seen in by others. The second reason is, that we are apt to give an unrestrained liberty to the tongue ;—an evil, too frequently attended with the most serious consequences. Some are always ready to talk, and to talk about news,

scandal, defamation, or any thing which has come within the vortex of their knowledge, at any time, or to any person. Others, who are not so loquacious, keep a certain guard over their tongue, and may, on certain occasions, be entrusted with secrets; but who, nevertheless, break out from time to time, particularly when the conduct of a person is canvassed, who has injured them, or with whom they are not in sentiments of christian charity. Pride, a certain interior pride, is the origin of this conduct in all of them. I will suggest to you a few reflections on these points. They will be applicable, more or less, to every one of you: and I beg your most earnest attention to them.

The Apostle does not impose a positive command in the words of my text, because there is nothing definite to which it can be applied. They are words of exhortation: they point out means of avoiding many faults, and of attaining to a state of greater perfection. They are words, which have no reference to the vices of the tongue, such as swearing, lying, defamation, calumny, and slander; but relate solely to the flippancy of the tongue, or talkativeness, which they caution the Christian to avoid, as unbecoming the sanctity of his state. It is not said that such a disposition is criminal in itself. A Christian may indulge in conversation, and may even engross the principal part of it to himself, and yet not incur any the least degree of guilt. But, when this is habitually

indulged,—when the most unrestrained liberty is given to the tongue, and no rule observed, except that of speaking every thing that comes into the mind, then the consequences frequently are such as to render the person highly criminal in the sight of God. And when this is the case, it becomes a duty to lay a restraint upon the tongue, and carefully to weigh the import of our words before we utter them.

In some we witness, not so much a spirit of talking perpetually, as a certain dogmatising way of speaking, by which they seem to expect that every one should yield to their opinion, and are swift to anger, or feel displeased within themselves, when others are not convinced by their arguments. These people never think of giving up their opinion to the perhaps better judgment of others. Their only criterion of sound discrimination is the light in which such or such a subject appears in their eyes. It seems clear to them, and they never once think that the same may appear in a different and perhaps better light to others.

This is very often the case. We witness it ourselves daily. When a person is open to conviction, a fondness for our own opinion is entirely innocent. But, when a person is so wedded to his own ideas, that he will pay no kind of attention to the judgment of others, and is offended when others will not consent to what he conceives to be the right, or the best, then a certain degree of criminality is incurred, and

the criminality consists in a certain interior pride, which causes him to over-rate his own abilities, and to undervalue those of others.

I do not mean to say, that we are to have no opinion of our own; or, that it is the duty of the humble Christian to give up his opinion at all times to the sentiments of others. This would be unworthy a rational being, and would denote rather a mean and despicable character, than a pious and enlightened Christian. But I speak of the man, who forms his own opinions according to his own ideas alone, and when those opinions are once formed, will listen to no reasonings, to no arguments, which others, of known abilities, may bring forward. We are all acquainted with people of this description, and our usual expression is, when speaking of any one of them: "Oh! it is to no purpose trying to convince him:—it is impossible to turn him." These are the people of whom I speak: and of them it may be said, that they are under the influence of a certain interior pride, which is directly opposite to the spirit of humility. The true Christian is allowed to form an opinion on any subject, and may, with consistency, adhere to that opinion, until sufficient arguments are brought forward to convince him that it was ill-founded. But then, he will listen attentively to others. He will weigh his arguments candidly. He will be *swift to hear*. Whereas, the other listens only to himself, and defies every power of argument to

make the least impression on his haughty and stubborn mind.

Oh! my brethren, let us guard against this spirit of self sufficiency. If we feel within ourselves any symptoms of it, let us consider that we are not infallible,—that we may be led into hasty, and incorrect conclusions,—that others have powers of discriminating as well as ourselves,—that we may *possibly* be in the wrong, and that they may *possibly* be in the right. Then, with the aid of true humility, we shall easily comply with the injunction of the Apostle, and shall be *swift to hear, but slow to speak*.

There are others who transgress against this rule of the apostle, in a different way. Their fault arises, not from a stubborn inflexibility of character, like the former, but from a certain lightness and gaiety of disposition, which causes them to be always talking, and to be seldom disposed to listen for any length of time. Their ideas run quick, and their tongues run in unison with them. No thought is suffered to lie concealed in the mind. The tongue discloses every thing that passes there.—The fault of these is not so reprehensible in itself, as that of the former; although it is sometimes attended with more serious consequences. These are not always obstinate in their opinions. When they can be prevailed upon to listen, they may easily be convinced of errors in judgment. They may be led, and sometimes may be led too easily. Their pride, whatever it may

be, is of a more harmless kind. They do not despise the judgment of others, nor do they much over-rate their own. They love to hear themselves talk, and that is nearly all. Having no systematic opinions to uphold, they never weigh before-hand what they are to say, nor do they pay much attention afterwards to what has been said, either by themselves or others. Having no malice in their hearts, they consider their communications as pleasant and innocent conversation, and are gratified in proportion to the share which they have had in it.

Their fault, therefore, is not so very reprehensible, if all was at an end as soon as the conversation was concluded. But unfortunately, this is too generally not the case. Consequences follow from it, which are the causes of serious evils. Were all the hearers as open-hearted, and as free from guile as these thoughtless speakers, every thing would die away, and be forgotten. But it often happens, that, amongst the hearers, there is one, or more, of a dark and suspicious disposition : who listens eagerly to every thoughtless word ;—who catches up every innocent joke that is passed upon an absent friend, and stores it up as a sufficient cause for future defamation ;—who, from every unguarded expression or remark, is ready to form conclusions of the most unfavourable kind ;—and who seizes the first opportunity to propagate slander and calumny against those, whom the thoughtless speaker never intended

to accuse.—People of this dark character are to be found in almost every company. They are generally silent, unless personally addressed, in the midst of these unguarded conversations. Their attention is chiefly taken up in collecting materials for their future scandals:—at least, they never ask for any explanation on those points, in order to be assured that there is no misunderstanding. Right information is what they do not seek. With a heart prone to evil, and addicted to evil themselves, they are always ready to think evil of others: and the least hint that is given of evil in others, they immediately form it into something grievous, believe it themselves, and propagate it amongst their acquaintance, as a fact of undoubted authority. I myself before now, have witnessed conversations of this kind. After a time, I have heard evil reports. I have traced these reports, and have traced them back to those very conversations, to which I myself was witness, and in which no accusation whatever was intended, no scandal supposed to have been given. All was open-heartedness and good will, and nothing reprehensible but the want of a sufficient guard over the tongue, and an ill placed reliance on the piety of all their hearers, supposing that they were all animated with the same universal good will, as they were themselves. This is what I myself have witnessed. Others have, or may have witnessed the same. Perhaps it will not be too much to say, that a

considerable portion of the scandals which are propagated, particularly in regard to persons of probity and good character, arise from this source.

This is one of the consequences flowing from the unrestrained liberty of the tongue. It is a serious one, and the evils caused by it are frequently incalculable, and irremediable. The unintentional author, we allow, is not responsible for the whole: but it ought to operate as a warning, and give a check to that restless member—the tongue. It ought to cause every person to be very cautious what he says before people whom he knows little about, and before people whose good dispositions are not well known to him:—and it ought to induce him to weigh well the import of every word, or sentence, or anecdote, before he suffers it to escape from his lips. A caution of this kind can alone secure him from being the thoughtless, or unintentional cause of serious evils.

In addition to this, there are other effects arising from the unrestrained liberty of the tongue, when none were intended. Where there is much talking, there will be but little reflection. In fact, reflection will decrease in proportion to the volubility which is allowed to the tongue. Now, where reflection is less, there is the greater danger of stepping beyond the boundaries of discretion. And where the danger is greater, and no care taken to avoid it, what is to be expected but that discretion will

be injured, and many things said, which ought never to have escaped the lips? Yes: this is too generally the case. In many words there are many things reprehensible. A talkative person too frequently divulges secrets, without once thinking of the consequences. A talkative person is apt to speak at random, without being assured of the truth of what he says. A talkative person is apt to give his opinion of persons or things, at first thought, and consequently without judgment, whereby he is liable to advance opinions, which are incorrect, or injurious to others. A talkative person is in continual danger of making remarks which will not be relished by some one or other of the company, and which, if resented, may give rise to altercations, quarrels, dissensions, animosities, and a long train of most serious evils, particularly if these remarks are mentioned afterwards to those who were not present at the time.— In a word, a talkative person is considered, even by the world, as a person not fit to be entrusted with secrets of importance, nor worthy to be ranked in the number of confidential friends; and when it is known, that the person is a stranger to the spirit of religion, the talkative person is considered by the world as a dangerous person, with whom the less connexion the better. I do not speak of the person who indulges in all the vices of the tongue, slander, calumny, &c. but merely the talkative person, who speaks every thing that comes into his

mind, and who has no discretion in his conversation.

These, my brethren, are evils arising from the unrestrained liberty of the tongue. Although no positive guilt can be attached to this or that sentence, or remark, taken individually, yet the whole conversation of a talkative person, taken collectively, is calculated to produce, and oftentimes does produce all, or some of these evils.

Let it be your endeavour, therefore, to curb the tongue, and to keep it within due subjection. It is a *restless member*, and will not be subdued but with great pains, and many struggles. But be not discouraged. Labour strenuously, as for a greater good: and, in time, the reward of victory will be your portion.—Do not consider it as a business of trifling importance. It leads to the summit of perfection. *He that offendeth not in words*, says St. James, *the same is a perfect man.* (James iii.) Do not consider it as a business beneath your attention. It is a work of wisdom to restrain the tongue: and it is a proof of wisdom to know when to be silent. *The lips of the unwise*, says Ecclesiasticus, (c. xxi.) *will be telling foolish things; but the words of the wise shall be weighed in a balance. The heart of fools is in their mouth: and the mouth of wise men is in their heart. He that setteth bounds to his mouth*, says the Wise Man, *is knowing and wise: and the man of understanding is of a precious spirit. Even a fool, if*

he will hold his peace, shall be accounted wise, and if he close his lips, a man of understanding. (Prov. xvii. 27, 28.) What can be more expressive than these sentences? They were dictated by the spirit of understanding, and consequently, they are worthy of your most serious attention.—Set about this work, therefore, with earnestness. Seek after true wisdom, where it is to be found. Be assured that, where there is much babbling, there is little wisdom: and, for the honour of your character, endeavour to avoid it. We all wish to be accounted persons of understanding, and to be far exalted above the rank of fools. Labour, then, to restrain that flippancy of the tongue, which, more than any thing else, denotes a near alliance with folly.—I do not wish you to understand that the silent man is always a wise man. This would be contrary to the known character of human nature; for there are many, of weak abilities, and little piety, who are naturally inclined to silence; and there are others, who are silent through bashfulness, or a reservedness of temper; and others, who make it their object to listen in silence, in order to obtain materials for scandal and defamation.—Nor do I wish to throw a damp on the cheerfulness of innocent conversation, by advising you to meet together like mutes, and to spend your hours of relaxation in dumb silence. No, there is a time to speak, and a time not to speak: and, to know the proper time for each of these, may be pro-

perly called the summit of wisdom. This is what I recommend to you, as a business worthy of your attention.

Apply your minds, therefore, to it seriously. Reject that false and foolish notion, which is entertained by many, of always speaking your mind, without regard to consequences. Follow the dictates of the spirit of God. Govern your tongue. It is indeed a small member, as the same St. James says, (c. iii.) but by governing it, you acquire means of governing the whole body. *Be, therefore, swift to hear, but slow to speak, and slow to anger.* You will thus be advancing towards perfection, and you will be preparing yourselves for a participation of the rewards, which are reserved for the perfect in the bosom of the Divinity.

END OF VOL. I.

ERRATA.

Page	Line	
34,	10,	<i>after any add one.</i>
79,	22,	<i>for center read centered.</i>
229,	5,	<i>from bottom, for was read were.</i>
245,	2,	<i>from do. for after read often.</i>
262,	7,	<i>for weens read runs.</i>
265,	12,	<i>for reprehensible read responsible.</i>
267,	7,	<i>for bucket read bushel.</i>
312,	4,	<i>from bottom, after the add malice of.</i>
373,	19,	<i>after mercies add of God.</i>

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